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Any Neighbourhood Can Be Great—Edmonton Trends

By JOHN KOLKMAN, Research and Policy Analysis Coordinator, *Edmonton Social Planning Council*

Earlier this Fall, the ESPC released the latest edition of our signature publication, *Tracking the Trends*. In addition to tracking trends at the City or metro level, every edition of *TtT* has a special area of focus. For the 2009 edition, we chose neighbourhoods as a focus—taking advantage of recently released 2006 census data to take a detailed look at social well-being at the neighbourhood level (which is only possible every five years).

More importantly, this area of focus was chosen because **neighbourhoods matter**. Like many Edmontonians, I'm very passionate about my neighbourhood. I'm also passionate about the importance of neighbourhoods to the well-being of large cities like Edmonton.

Edmonton is a city with a history of citizen involvement with their neighbourhoods. This is best exemplified by the Edmonton's community leagues, one of North America's oldest and most active volunteer-based groups organized at the neighbourhood level. (See page 3 & 9 for more on *Edmonton's community leagues*.)

There's an old saying about 'a chain only being as strong as its weakest link.' That's true of cities as well. Cities are only as strong as their most vulnerable neighbourhoods. The greatest disparities in socio-economic status are not between cities or provinces in Canada, but between neighbourhoods in the same cities. Some of Edmonton's highest and lowest income neighbourhoods are located mere kilometers apart. Yet they are separated by vast differences in income, wealth, housing quality, and educational and economic opportunity.

Ranking neighbourhoods in terms of well-being is not without risk. A major risk is trying to make sure reports like *Tracking the Trends* don't further stigmatize already vulnerable neighbourhoods. The Edmonton Police Service's neighbourhood crime mapping tool has faced some criticism for this very reason.

But let's not kid ourselves. Many Edmontonians already have strong views about which neighbourhoods are desirable places to live and which are not. As a resident of a low

income neighbourhood for over 30 years, I sometimes get the surprised reaction, "You live there!," when a casual conversation gets around to the topic of where in the City I live. Publications like *Tracking the Trends* make sure perceptions about neighbourhoods are rooted in fact rather than conjecture.

Tracking the Trends examines neighbourhood well-being across the following dimensions: low income measured by household; low income measured by family; average household income; change in average household income over the past 20 years; housing tenure; and unemployment. Using these data dimensions, a neighbourhood vulnerability index was created. One in ten Edmonton neighbourhoods, 23 in total, received a 'most vulnerable' rating.

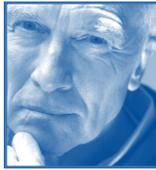
Fourteen of the 23 most vulnerable neighbourhoods are located in north central Edmonton, and in the mature areas of northeast Edmonton. There are also clusters of 'most vulnerable' neighbourhoods in the old Jasper Place area, in the Callingwood area, and in the older neighbourhoods of Millwoods. These neighbourhoods had significantly above average poverty and unemployment rates, and below average incomes and rates of homeownership.

One of the more interesting trends we measured is how Edmonton neighbourhoods have changed over the past 20 years in terms of household income. Between 1986 and 2006 there has been a significant migration of higher income households from older neighbourhoods to newer neighbourhoods at the edge of the City. Neighbourhoods built before the 1980s tended to have a mix on incomes and housing types. However, federal and provincial governments withdrew funding to build new affordable housing starting in the late 1980s. This likely contributed to the trend of housing only affordable to households with higher incomes being built in newer neighbourhoods.

Since 1986, four out of five older neighbourhoods experienced declines in average household incomes relative to the City average. All lower income neighbourhoods and

(Continued on page 2)





Neighbourhood Trends, *cont'd from page 1*

most higher income older neighbourhoods lost ground compared to the City average. The exceptions to this trend of declining household incomes are neighbourhoods located in the river valley or adjacent to the river valley and ravines.

There is also little evidence in Edmonton of gentrification—a process whereby higher income residents displace low income residents from central neighbourhoods—as has been observed in cities like Toronto and Vancouver. A greater challenge in Edmonton is to ensure a better mix of incomes and housing types in older low income neighbourhoods to prevent poverty and deprivation from becoming too deeply entrenched in certain areas of the City.

Tracking the Trends also found growing disparity between Edmonton lowest and highest income neighbourhoods. As measured by average household income, the poorest 10% of neighbourhoods have

steadily lost ground to the wealthiest 10% of neighbourhoods between 1986 to 2006.

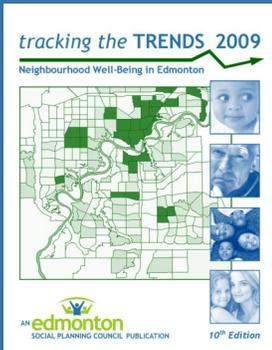
As a McCauley resident for thirty plus years, I can attest that lower income neighbourhoods can have many great qualities. Housing is more affordable. Public transit service is better. There is a mature urban forest. Commercial areas have unique shops and restaurants (often ethnic) and a large proportion of independent stores and businesses. Recreation facilities and schools are often located nearby. The grid system of streets makes older neighbourhoods more easily navigable for walkers and bikers.

Any neighbourhood can be great. Some neighbourhoods just need a bit more help than others. Tracking neighbourhood trends can help decision makers direct more resources to more vulnerable neighbourhoods to assist them in their revitalization efforts.

tracking the TRENDS 2009

On October 1st, the ESPC released the latest edition of our flagship publication, *Tracking the Trends*.

The publication features a variety of current & historical data. This edition also includes full-colour maps of Edmonton neighbourhood data. *TTT 2009* is a **great resource** for anyone working on social issues in the Edmonton area!



Visit edmontonsocialplanning.ca to view slides of the graphs and maps, **OR**

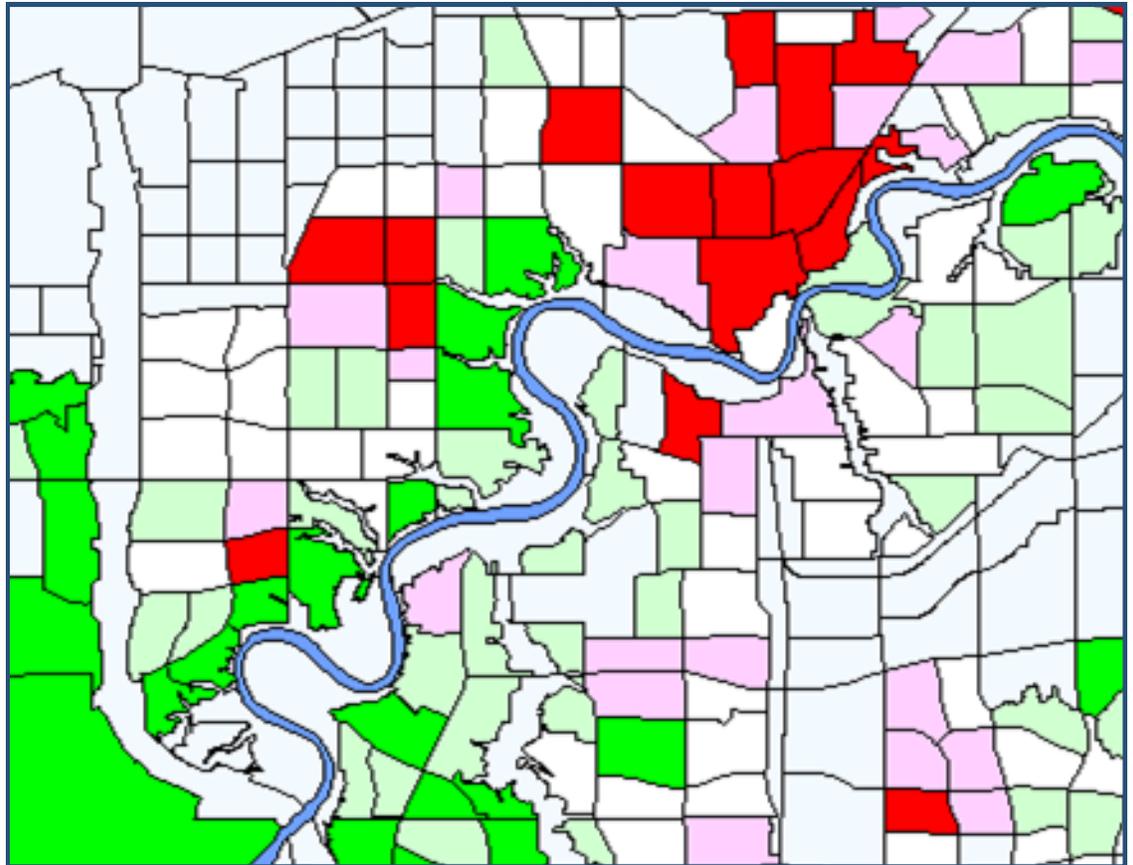
Purchase your own copy (incl. data tables & analysis) for \$33.00 + shipping.

ESPC members save \$10.00!!

Visit our website to order today!

Call Stephanie @ 780.423.2031 x 349 for more information.

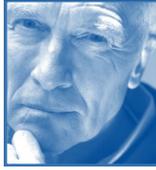
Below: A section of the Neighbourhood Vulnerability Index map in *Tracking the Trends 2009*.



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An audio version of this newsletter is available on our website (edmontonsocialplanning.ca).

Recordings of *the fACTivist* are generously provided by VoicePrint Canada, the non-profit, 24/7 audio newsstand. Visit www.voiceprintcanada.com for more information.



Neighbourhoods 'R' Us: Community Leagues

By JENNIFER HOYER, Resource Coordinator, *Edmonton Social Planning Council*

In September I had a chat with Allan Bolstad, Executive Director of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. We talked about the roles of the Federation and individual community leagues in shaping neighbourhoods around Edmonton, and I learned a lot about what the EFCL is doing to ensure we have great communities to live in.

What is the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues? What role does it play in the community, and what services does it provide?

The EFCL provides assistance to the 150 community leagues which represent neighbourhoods across the city. In the words of Executive Director Allan Bolstad, the EFCL "does neighbourhoods". By supporting the activities of community leagues, the Federation develops neighbourhood networks and provides opportunities for Edmontonians to get involved. While some municipalities have similar networks of community associations, Edmonton's Federation and its network of 150 leagues is unique in its level of activity and its involvement with community development.

How is the network of community leagues set up in Edmonton?

The relationship between the Federation and each of the 150 leagues is important; the Federation supports the activities of the leagues but does not direct their interests. Each league might have a different focus, depending on the concerns of the neighbourhood it represents. Traditionally, community leagues work on one or more of three areas: building facilities, setting up programming (such as sports and recreation activities, summer programs, or babysitter training), and acting as the voice of the community in communication with groups such as school boards, public transit, and local governments.

The staff at the Federation are always ready to give each of the leagues a hand. A Planning Advisor is available to help with zoning, bylaw, transportation, or planning and development issues, and an Accountant can help with any financial questions. The EFCL's new 2009 edition of the Resource Guide is a huge help for the leagues; it clearly outlines everything needed to run a League, from templates for contracts and

bylaws to helpful guidelines for planning events.

What kind of impact do community leagues have on the health of a neighbourhood?

By bringing people together, community leagues help residents feel safe in their communities. Only after people feel safe about the area they live in will they take the time to build friendships, volunteer their time in the community, and invest in their property.

One of the exciting things about the Federation is that the number of member community leagues is always growing; Edmonton's expanding perimeter has created several new neighbourhoods. As people move into new suburbs they often realize that they won't have an opportunity to run into their neighbours unless they organize something. The Federation has made it easy for new communities to coordinate their own local league and establish healthy relationships with their neighbours.

What role does the Federation take in speaking on behalf of the community leagues? How does it take a stand on issues that not every neighbourhood will agree on?

The Federation is proud to maintain a very close working relationship with the City of Edmonton, who will inform them immediately of new developments. One important role of the Federation is representing the leagues and speaking on their behalf to various levels of government.

At the same time, not every neighbourhood will have the same opinion on some divisive topics. When member communities may feel strongly about both sides of an issue, the Federation will only make statements on general issues. In Bolstad's words, "when we speak, we speak for everybody".

While the Federation is only in a position to advocate on behalf of its entire membership, each of the leagues is free to speak on

(Continued on page 4)

Looking for Information on Social Issues?

Visit the **ESPC Resource Library** today!

Open to the public:
M– F 8:30am- 4:30pm

Online Catalogue:
Available 24/7 @ socialresearchlibrary.ca

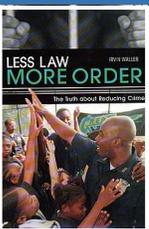
Our resource library is a rich source of current and historical publications on social issues.

Featured Report:

Youth Homelessness in Canada: the road to solutions (Raising the Roof, 2009)



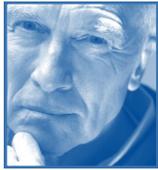
Featured Book:



Less Law More Order: the Truth about Reducing Crime (Waller, I., 2009)



Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues



Community Leagues, *cont'd from page 2*

behalf of its own constituency. The Federation's Planner is able to help with developing and presenting a position.

What are some of the EFCL's biggest accomplishments?

The Federation has existed since 1921, and through that entire time it has been very involved in the planning and development of the city. In terms of advocacy and policy, the EFCL has recently been very involved in the development of guidelines for the redevelopment of older neighbourhoods.

Bolstad was clear that the Federation's greatest strength is its ability to bring people together. Under this umbrella, advocacy for walkability has always been a big part of the Federation's mandate. "Walkability" describes how easy it is for residents to walk safely through their neighbourhood; when people can walk easily through their community they will have the opportunity to meet their neighbours and feel comfortable with the lay of the land. In addition, many community league programs are focused on young people. The neighbourhood can be large and still navigable for this group of citizens if bike and walking routes are properly designed.

One of the most visible results of the extensive network of community leagues is the minor league sports system; according to Bolstad, all minor league sports started through the EFCL. Soccer continues to be hugely dependent on the leagues for its success, as the leagues play a key role in recruiting participants and coordinating volunteers and staff.

Another big accomplishment is the huge number of community league facilities in neighbourhoods – 124 community league buildings, 110 rinks, and 35 tennis courts. These facilities are on city land but are owned and operated by the leagues.

According to Bolstad, community leagues bring two key assets to the members of a neighbourhood:

- ◆ People learn a lot of skills by being involved in their community league—through helping with projects, running meetings, or coordinating volunteers, and all in a fairly relaxed environment. These experiences provide valuable skills for future work and life situations.
- ◆ Community leagues help people feel good about where they're living, and this is when they will begin to volunteer in their community and invest in their property.

What is the future of Community Leagues and the neighbourhoods they represent?

Bolstad thinks there will be a resurgence in community leagues as interest shifts towards activities closer to home. There was, at one time, a move towards urban sprawl, but this trend is now swinging in the other direction. We have grown tired of long commutes to work, soccer games, piano lessons, and the supermarket. We're looking for places close to home where we can connect and engage with people around us.

Visit the website of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues at www.efcl.org for more information, or to find the League for your neighbourhood!

The Future of Community:

Speakers Series

In 2010, the ESPC, E4C and the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) will be celebrating milestone anniversaries:

ECF — 20 years
E4C — 40 years
&
ESPC — 70 years

To celebrate their achievements in service provision, advocacy and community support, the 3 agencies are co-hosting an exciting speakers series.

The upcoming speakers include:

Zaib Shaikh
Joel Cohen
Linda Hughes
Sheila Watt-Cloutier

Dates & venues to be announced shortly. Tickets will be available through TIX on the Square (tixonthesquare.ca)

meet the ESPC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Helen Sadowski Supports ESPC's Independent Voice



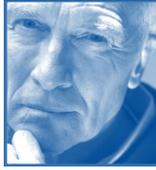
Helen has been with the ESPC board since Fall 2008. She has recently retired from the federal government and is very committed to social justice and human rights.

Helen is a strong believer in the role of government to provide communities with the autonomy, flexibility and resources to address problems of poverty and homelessness. She believes that the ESPC has an important role as an independent voice to inform the community about the issues Edmontonians face.

Through her career experience Helen has

developed social and labour-market related policy and has extensive experience in managing research initiatives and incorporating results in policy and program development. She is the Former Regional Director and Special Advisor, National Homelessness Initiative, Alberta/NWT/Nunavut HRDC.

Helen and her husband Virendra have 2 children. She was born in Toronto but moved to Edmonton 1982. She loves the city with its river valley, diverse population and excellent education system. Helen has a passion for travelling, which allows her to meet people from all walks of life.



Neighborhoods & the Ethno-Cultural Experience

By JON BOL, *MacEwan Social Work Practicum Student, Edmonton Social Planning Council*

A challenge for neighbourhoods in Edmonton, especially those with emerging communities of immigrants and refugees, is the lack of engagement or integration into the new culture. Many immigrant families are not attached to the mainstream community due to the fact that most of them do not have access to community resources in the City. This may be because many new immigrant are illiterate, very busy with establishing their lives, and struggling to learn English.

As an immigrant and refugee who has been involved in the process of integration for more than four years in Edmonton, I have learned that integrating one's culture into another culture takes hard work and support from both the new and the mainstream communities. This is because most immigrants have large families which may pose challenges since this is a new country for them. The challenges that immigrant and refugee communities face today may include lack of integration into their respective neighborhoods, schools, and work places, to mention only a few.

Barriers to Resources

Many immigrant and refugee community members live in neighborhoods where they don't have access to resources such as recreation and other services for children and families. The main reason for this may be that they don't know how to access the services that are available. For instance, they don't know who they can contact to find out if there are services available for them.

In addition, many emerging immigrant and refugee families have limited English. Many parents don't communicate well in English—this can make them afraid to connect with others. Therefore, communication is a barrier that hinders most immigrants from integrating into their neighborhoods.

Many parents attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, as well as upgrading or other skills training. After immigrant parents complete these classes, most of them go into part-time jobs, which again keep them from interacting with their neighbors. In contrast, many mainstream Edmonton parents have more time to relax with their children when they finish working.

Juggling Multiple Roles

I believe the immigrant and the refugee community members—especially parents—

have three major life roles: education, work (part-time or full-time), and parenting. These three responsibilities make it difficult for immigrant families to integrate into their neighborhoods. Mainstream Edmontonians do not always realize or appreciate the difficulties of juggling these roles.

How can an immigrant person, whose daily life involves little spare time, communicate and integrate with his or her neighborhood? This question may seem negative or strange. It may be hard to fully understand it unless you can put yourself into the place of a recent immigrant. Even some immigrants and refugees who came to Canada with higher education may not understand this question because they might not have experienced the same pressures that the majority of the emerging immigrants and refugees experience.

Multiple Cultural Barriers

Culture sometimes is the most challenging aspect for someone who left his or her tradition and political beliefs. Some people act like children when they do not have an understanding of the new culture where many things are different: education, lifestyle, social norms, work force experience, politics, law and so forth. To the immigrant and refugee, there is a cultural shock or gap between the country you want to be in and the one you want to leave behind. The ideal may be to integrate into both cultures—but it has never been easy to live in two cultures at the same time.

Learning English is not an easy task for many immigrant families. As parents struggle to get a Canadian recognized educational credential, their children also face challenges in their education experience. So it is not just immigrant and refugee parents, but also children and youth who face barriers to integration.

Not only do immigrants have challenges at school; they also face challenges at the work place since many of them work in jobs that pay minimum wage. This makes it harder for them to participate in community recreation activities. For instance, during the summer months, when many mainstream families may get together for vacations and camping, most immigrant and refugee families do not have the same opportunities. In particular, immigrant and refugee families who are low

(Continued on page 6)

2nd Annual Christmas Bake Sale Fundraiser

You're in for a treat if you drop by the ESPC office on **November 26th**!

Back by popular demand, we'll be selling a selection of delectable Christmas treats as part of our annual United Way fundraising campaign.

The sale will run from **10am until we sell out.** Come early for the best selection!

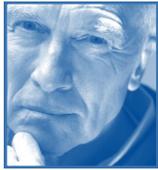
Support the United Way — Support the ESPC

The ESPC's fundraising goal for the annual United Way campaign is **\$2,000!**

You can help us reach our goal by making a donation through our campaign.

You can also support us by designating a portion of your donation to the ESPC.

Contact John at 780.423.2031 x351 for more information.



Ethno-Cultural Communities, *cont'd from page 5*

income need to work over the Summer to earn money in order to be able to continue their education in the Fall. There is little time for fun or enjoyment for many of the newer immigrant communities in Edmonton. If immigrant community members had opportunities to participate in the summer time activities, it would be easier for them to integrate.

Many refugee community members do not have experience with "recreation, vacations or camping" from their home countries. They don't usually have time to explore these activities here, either. However, I believe this would be a good way for new Canadians to participate in Canadian culture if they had the opportunity.

Tackling Barriers

Strengthening all Edmonton neighborhoods requires every citizen's efforts to come together and collectively strategize for the future of our community. To tackle barriers, all the community agencies need to connect with visible minority community members and leaders.

The communities of McCauley, McDougall, and Queen Mary Park are using a new model that engages community members in an inclusive dialogue to envision their hopes

and dreams for their neighbourhood. This strategy—and the success these neighborhoods are experiencing—was the result of community animation led by the Edmonton Multicultural Coalition for Equity in Health and Well Being. This initiative is part of the Multicultural Policy passed in 2007 by the City of Edmonton and supported by the Multicultural Coalition, which represents many different ethno-cultural groups in Edmonton. As immigrant and refugee communities in Edmonton have expressed, attracting and retaining newcomers depends upon the support of existing immigrants—it is their word of mouth that will attract other new Canadians to move to Edmonton.

The City's groundbreaking multicultural policy has resulted in grant programs and a civic engagement strategy for immigrant and refugee communities in Edmonton. To tackle the barriers and close the gap, all agencies that serve immigrants need to involve volunteers from the communities they serve. This involvement can create social interaction, integration, and community building that will lead to a more inclusive community identity among all Edmontonians.

Visit edmonton.ca or multiculturalcoalition.ca for more information.

Youth GAP Report Now Available!

Our youth interns Jacalyn Ambler and Kavina Mistry are proud to present the YouthGAP (Youth Gang Alternatives Project) Report. This publication takes an in-depth look at issues surrounding youth-gangs in Edmonton:

- ♦ the reasons youth become involved in gangs,
- ♦ various methods for dealing with at-risk or gang-involved youth, and
- ♦ programs currently in place in Edmonton.

The result of thorough research and interviews with community service providers, the YouthGAP Report is a great resource for anyone involved with these issues. Visit edmontonsocialplanning.ca to download your free copy today!

APPLY NOW!

The ESPC is currently accepting applications for Youth Internship projects beginning in January 2010. Visit our website, or contact Jennifer at 780.423.2031 x 354 for more information.

Connecting Virtually Against Poverty



by PENNY GOLDSMITH, Executive Director, PovNet

PovNet is more than a virtual community; it is flesh and bones with a real heart. It is organic. And if the internet failed tomorrow, connections that have been made provincially, locally and nationwide would endure.

— Alayne Keough, PovNetter

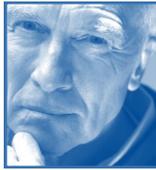
You might be forgiven for wondering what a website has to do with a discussion about neighbourhoods. But PovNet is so much more than a web site. It provides a home for advocates and community workers who network about anti-poverty issues, and government policies around homelessness and poverty. It is a forum for direct-service workers to exchange strategies and ideas and to vent when they are frustrated with not being able to cut through bureaucratic red tape. It is an online learning network via PovNetU, where advocates and community workers can take courses and interact with other advocates.

PovNet's community of users is vast. One person might go to the web site and get some information and use it to teach a class. Somebody else might go to the web site to see what's happening in their community on

the events calendar. The site is also much used by people looking for legal assistance on the "Find an Advocate" map. People in rural communities find PovNet particularly useful as they often don't have the resources that are available in more urban centres.

PovNet has only two rules: (1) there are no stupid questions and (2) it's always the computer's fault. PovNet isn't about the technology; it's about the community advocates who use it. It is a communications commons. People are taking this technology to use it for their own purposes and to bring it back into their own neighbourhoods. What they do with that information can become a social justice movement.

Visit povnet.org for more information, or email jenniferh@edmontonsocialplanning.ca to join the Alberta PovNet listserv.



Empowering Neighbourhoods for Safety

by ANETTE KINLEY, *Research & Communications Assistant, Edmonton Social Planning Council*

A distinctive, community-based approach to neighbourhood crime prevention and safety has made a mark on Edmonton neighbourhoods. Over the past 8 years, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS)—in partnership with the City of Edmonton, the Family Centre, and the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region—has established Neighbourhood Empowerment Teams (NET teams) in six “at risk” areas of the city: Britannia-Youngstown, Calder, Callingwood South, Bonnie Doon, Southwood and 118th Avenue. These NET teams bring together community police officers, community capacity builders, youth intervention workers and neighbourhood residents to develop innovative approaches to community issues.

Community-Driven Solutions

One of the key goals of the NET approach is to empower neighbourhood residents to take action on community issues—creating community-based solutions that are resident-driven, rather than police-driven. This type of community engagement will help to ensure that crime prevention strategies match the unique needs of each neighbourhoods. After all, the people living in a community have a much closer perspective on the situation, and on what will work.

The NET approach has six core crime prevention programs:

- ◆ **Apartment Safe:** a tool for resident

managers to address crime in their buildings;

- ◆ **Auto Safe:** a program focused on the deterrence and prevention of auto theft;
- ◆ **Bully Busters:** a classroom-based approach to prevent bullying through awareness— and skill-building.
- ◆ **Safe & Secure Homes:** an initiative to prevent break and enters.
- ◆ **Safe Squad:** a resident patrol team acting as the eyes and ears of the neighbourhood and a visual crime deterrent

To ensure that the community takes ownership of these programs, the NET teams set up local **Community Crime Councils**. These Councils are made up of community stakeholders (residents, agencies, businesses, etc.) who meet regularly to develop creative approaches to crime and safety issues. EPS believes that this holistic approach based on community energy and resources will result in more effective long-term change than traditional police-driven approaches. The EPS and its partners are committed to ensuring that the NET teams continues to thrive, and are working on strategies to ensure that more neighbourhoods will benefit from this innovative approach in the future.

For more information, visit edmontonpolice.ca (Crime Prevention) or myunitedway.ca (Community Partnerships).

meet the ESPC STAFF

Hoyer Combines Passions at ESPC: Books & Social Issues



Jennifer Hoyer moved to Edmonton in August of 2009 to start work with the Edmonton Social Planning Council as Resource Coordinator. Most recently from Montréal, she completed a Masters in Library and Information Studies while working on the reference desk at Canada’s oldest library and as librarian at an inner-city elementary school. She helped coordinate several student organizations around McGill University that sought to involve the various faith communities represented on campus in social justice dialogue and action.

Jennifer isn’t brand new to Edmonton; previously she completed a music degree at The King’s University College, and has

performed regularly with groups in Prince George, Edmonton and Montreal. The switch to librarianship wasn’t completely out-of-the-blue, however. She is often to be found in possession of (or being possessed by) a good book and loves helping others find the books and information they’re looking for. When the position of Resource Coordinator opened up at the ESPC it seemed like a natural fit, allowing her to use her librarian training while dealing with some of the social issues she cares deeply about.

A huge fan of good food, Jennifer misses Montréal smoked meat and bagels, but welcomes green onion cakes and Alberta beef back as a regular part of her life. It turns out that you can take a girl out of the prairies, but it’s not too hard to bring her back!

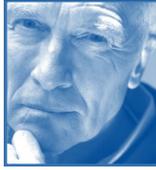
Welcome!

The ESPC is proud to welcome our new Resource Coordinator, Jennifer Hoyer.

Jennifer joined the Council on Aug 20, 2009.

We are also excited to welcome our new MacEwan Social Work practicum student, John Bol.

John will be working at the ESPC office two days per week from September through April.



1940: When it all Began

The ESPC was founded in 1940 as the *Edmonton Council of Social Agencies*. This quote from the first annual report gives a vivid picture of the world the ECSA was born in to:

“Events of staggering import in Canada and throughout the world provided the backdrop for the first year’s work of the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies. After winter months of ominous quiet, the word “Blitzkrieg” overnight took on a grim clarity of meaning. Denmark — Norway — Holland — Belgium — France — and with the autumn the most ferocious aerial assault in the history of warfare was launched against Britain. Total war had come. The Dominion too had elected to fight. By the end of the year Canadians had grimly adopted two resolutions: They would protect the machinery of democracy with their lives in Dover or Iceland or any other theatre of war. They would at last accept the seriousness of their task as guardians of that machinery at home and make themselves competent in its modern use instead of regarding it as a precious but cumbersome heirloom. By the first resolution, the rank and file of Canadians simply mean the war will be won. By the second, they mean that they will make democracy work. They will make democracy work in the daily lives of common citizens, in their free, confident association with each other, and in their acceptance of personal responsibility for the common good. It was against this national backdrop, built of physical challenge and moral determination, that Edmonton’s welfare organizations had their first year’s experience in co-operative association.”

(from the 1940 Annual Report of the ECSA, now the Edmonton Social Planning Council)

Celebrating 70 Years

A Legacy of Commitment to Community

The ESPC will be celebrating its 70th Anniversary in 2010!

We are planning some great events over the course of the year to recognize this significant milestone, including:

- ◆ **Anniversary Launch / Birthday Party** at City Hall, January 20, 2010. *(Stay tuned for details.)*
- ◆ **Lunchtime Learning Series**, throughout 2010 *(Details TBD)*
- ◆ **Celebratory Gala**, Fall 2010. *(Details TBD)*

To top it all off—every 2010 edition of the *fACTivist* will feature articles highlighting the evolving work of the Council and its achievements of over the past 7 decades.

The Gift of Edmonton’s Christmas Bureau

By LORI SIMON, *ESPC Volunteer* & ANETTE KINLEY, *Research & Communications Assistant, ESPC*

Did you know that Edmonton’s Christmas Bureau—one of Edmonton’s longest serving non-profit organizations—was founded by the ESPC in its inaugural year?

That’s right—In 1940, the Edmonton Council of Social Agencies formed a Christmas Committee to coordinate the Christmas hamper programs being run by various social agencies in the city.

The agencies involved with the Council agreed that in the past there had been wide variation from agency to agency in the quality of Christmas hampers, resulting in some injustice and dissatisfaction. The Christmas Committee developed a standard for agencies to use in preparing Christmas hampers. The suggested average hamper value brought:

“a measure of uniformity to the distribution of Christmas Cheer for the first time. Many small clubs which formerly gave lavish hampers were persuaded to help a larger number of families moderately, while other groups provided more adequately for smaller numbers.” *(1940 ECSA Annual Report)*

The Council office became the centre for the “Christmas Exchange,” which kept records of all families

recommended for hampers each Christmas season. In its first year, 54 organizations used the exchange to avoid duplication and ensure that the available resources reached as many families in need as possible. Around 1,070 families received hampers in that first year.

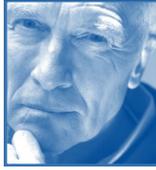
In 1954, the exchange was given its current name—the Christmas Bureau. Starting in 1960, a seasonal staff person was hired to coordinate the program; this addition had a massive impact on the profile and usage of the program. The numbers attest to the astounding growth: In 1961, the Christmas Bureau served 1,600 families. By 1970, over 15,000 Edmontonians received assistance in the form of gift certificates and food hampers!

The Council’s role as the coordinator of the Christmas Bureau came to an end in 1972 when the Bureau registered as a separate society. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Today, the Christmas Bureau of Edmonton serves over 60,000 people each holiday season—not just families, but also seniors and single individuals.

To learn more about the Christmas Bureau of Edmonton, visit christmasbureau.ca





A Full Fall Edition Inspired by Neighbourhoods

by SUSAN MORRISSEY, Executive Director, Edmonton Social Planning Council

This edition of the *fACTivist* is inspired by the diversity of Edmonton's neighbourhoods. We chose this particular area of interest to coincide with the work we completed for our recent report, *Tracking the Trends 2009: Neighbourhood Well-being in Edmonton*.

Edmonton has a very rich history when it comes to the neighbourhood/community league phenomena. In 1907, Edmonton was the first city of Canada to adopt the idea of community-based organizations. The original concept has its roots in the City of Rochester, New York called the "Social Centre Movement". In 1916 George M. Hall, a city Industrial Commissioner living in the Jasper Place district imported the idea of neighbourhood organizations in Canada and in 1917 the Community League Hockey program was started. That same year, the first Community League, Crestwood was formed concerning itself with district improvement, shared use of the school, social evening and organized sporting events.

Though the issues have changed over the year, the basic principle of neighbourhoods as an important catalyst in Edmonton to ensure citizens participate in their city and community continues.

For those of you who are interested in reading further about the history of community leagues in Edmonton, I would direct you to the book *Edmonton's Urban Villages: the Community League Movement, 2005* by Ron Kuban or go to the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues webpage for a chronological list at www.efcl.org.

As for other projects on the go, we are currently involved in the City of Edmonton Community Services social plan initiative. The 10 year plan—called "The Way We Live"—will guide future development and improvement of services and programs that contribute to Edmontonians' health, safety and well-being. The ESPC's role is to gather input from people who are facing social, cultural or economic barriers to a good quality of life.

Interested in the History of Social Issues in Edmonton?

You can browse through the ESPC's work from the past 70 years in our publication archive.

ESPC members can now access the archive online!

Contact Anette at 780.423.2031 x 351 or anettek@edmontonsocialplanning.ca for more information.

Not an ESPC Member?

Become one today! Just send in the membership application on page 10.

Want to Volunteer for the ESPC?

Get involved with some of our exciting anniversary projects!

Visit edmontonsocialplanning.ca & fill out our Volunteer Application form (*under the Support Us tab*).

Poverty Forum Tour Over, but the Hard Work Continues

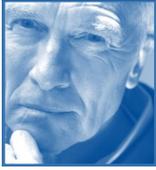
ESPC's Research and Policy Analysis Coordinator John Kolkman was a presenter at two recent forums exploring ways to take a more strategic approach to poverty reduction in Alberta. A Calgary forum on October 20 attracted over 100 participants, followed by an Edmonton forum on October 21 that attracted over 150 participants.

The forums were organized by Public Interest Alberta, the United Ways in each city, the ESPC, and other community organizations. Participants included community leaders, service providers, funders, policy-makers and interested citizens.

Sherri Torjman, Vice-President of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, was the keynote presenter at the Calgary and Edmonton forums. Sherri provided an overview of the major elements of taking a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction, and updates on poverty reduction strategies and initiatives underway in other Canadian provinces. John's presentation focused on how the current recession is likely to impact an Alberta poverty reduction

strategy, and the necessity of maintaining appropriate levels of public investment by all orders of government despite budgetary pressures. Mark Cabaj of the Tamarack Institute talked about the role of placed-based initiatives in poverty reduction efforts such as Vibrant Communities Edmonton's Make Tax Time Pay project. Breakout sessions were held at both forums to more fully discuss various aspects of a poverty reduction strategy. During the report-backs from the breakout sessions, there was a strong consensus in both cities for moving forward with a more comprehensive approach including the adoption of targets and timelines by the provincial government.

A report on all seven poverty reduction forums (including five held earlier this year in five Alberta regional cities) is currently being prepared. The plan is to make the report public later in November commensurate with the 20th anniversary of the unanimous House of Commons resolution to end child poverty by the year 2000. The report will also include updated information on Alberta poverty trends as well as proposed next steps.



our VISION

A healthy, just and inclusive community.



our MISSION

The Edmonton Social Planning Council provides leadership to the community and its organizations in addressing social issues and effecting changes to social policy.

CONTACT US

Suite 37, 9912 - 106 Street
Edmonton, AB T5H 4H8
Tel: (780) 423-2031
Fax: (780) 425-6244

info@edmontonsocialplanning.ca

STAFF

Susan Morrissey
Executive Director

John Kolkman
*Research & Policy
Analysis Coordinator*

Jennifer Hoyer
Resource Coordinator

Anette Kinley
*Research &
Communications Assistant*

Stephanie Haar
Administrative Assistant

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