



*f*ACTivist

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fACTivist

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New website, new faces, new adventures

By Susan Morrissey, Executive Director

Welcome to the spring edition of the *fACTivist*. You will notice a bit of a new format, as well as new contributions all in an effort to keep you informed of what is going on in our community.

We mentioned in our last newsletter that readers should anticipate some changes and we have delivered! Along with this new format, I am happy to report that Terry Jorden, our new Communications Officer and Manuel Escoto, our Research Assistant, have joined our team, bringing new energy and ideas to the work of ESPC.

The new ESPC website, launched on February 28, has seen an increase in visitors. While continuing to provide access to research reports, both written by ESPC and others and information about social issues, we are now presenting it in a refreshed and crisp format.



Speaking about new beginnings, some readers will remember that ESPC was an active member of the Edmonton Poverty Elimination Steering Committee. Under the direction of our new Mayor Don Iveson, the initiative of ending poverty has evolved into the Mayor's Taskforce on the Elimination of Poverty with the goal of creating strategies to eliminate poverty within a generation. Our role in this new initiative as a member of the Research Roundtable is to provide information and statistical data that provides a picture of what poverty looks like in Edmonton.

As we embark on these new adventures with some additional new faces, we recognize that there may be new learning curves to maneuver. We continue to endeavor to offer you information and access to resources that will keep you informed of what's going on in our community and as always encourage you to drop us a line with your feedback and suggestions.

On the cover ...

Members of the Inner Voice Choir perform during the 9th Homeless Memorial remembrance ceremony May 23. (from right, Marilyn Bird Quinney, Patricia Darbasie, and Wilma McLaughlin) Terry Jorden photo

The lives of 29 men and 11 women were celebrated at the site of the Homeless Sculpture.

Organized by the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, the service was officiated by Rev. Travis Enright.

The annual ceremony held in a small park just north of the Edmonton City Hall, was attended by about 200 people including Premier Dave Hancock, MP Laurie Hawn,

and city councillors Scott McKeen, Michael Walters, Amarjeet Sohi and Bev Esslinger.

The service is held to remember those who died in 2013 as a direct or indirect result of not having a home. By comparison, the lives of 45 people were remembered in 2012.



CBC's host of Q to make Edmonton appearance in support of Vital Signs report

For many long-time CBC radio listeners, one question that seemed impossible to answer was who could replace Morningside host Peter Gzowski?

For several years the coveted weekday morning time slot struggled to find its audience after Gzowski's death in 2002. But all that changed in 2007 when CBC launched Q with the relatively unknown host Jian Ghomeshi.

Since then, the 90-minute arts and current affairs program has surpassed all expectations, becoming the most listened to morning program in CBC radio history and making serious inroads into the US market and beyond through Public Radio International, and the skillful use of podcasts, webcasting, broadcasting and social media.

Now Canada's hottest broadcaster is coming to Edmonton to talk about identity.



Jian Ghomeshi

In this presentation at the University of Alberta's Myer Horowitz Theatre on November 8, Ghomeshi is expected to share his thoughts on our evolving national identity, by speaking on the topic "Re-Thinking the Canadian Identity: Where do I Fit In?" (Ghomeshi was born in London, England, of Iranian descent, but grew up in Toronto.)

The Edmonton Community Foundation is hosting the session in conjunction with the annual Vital Signs® report being released on October 7, 2014. Vital Signs® is a project of Community Foundations across Canada which allows Edmonton to compare itself to national statistics and to cities of similar size. This year's focus for the report is youth. ESPC partners with ECF to produce Edmonton's Vital Signs®.

Proceeds from this event will go to ECF's Young Edmonton Grant (YEG) Fund. Tickets are \$10 and available through eventbrite.ca

For more information: www.ecfoundation.org

2 pm Nov. 8 2014
U of A
Myer Horowitz Theatre
8900 114 Street
Tickets: \$10

News Shorts

EPL named library of the year

The Edmonton Public Library was unanimously named 2014 Library of the Year by *Library Journal* magazine and Gale Cengage Learning in June. EPL is the first ever Canadian library to receive this prestigious award.

Elexis Schloss receives Order of Canada

Philanthropist and volunteer Elexis Schloss became a member of the Order in Canada in May for her work in health care, cultural, social service and educational causes.

She was honored with the award for her work as a founder of Compassion House, a housing and support program in Northern Alberta for women undergoing treatment for breast cancer as well as her support of initiatives in the arts, athletics and health care. She also worked on behalf of immigrant women, the homeless, Aboriginal peoples and children in Africa living with HIV. The highest civilian honour was presented to Schloss and 33 others in a ceremony in Rideau Hall, Ottawa.



Elexis Schloss with Gov. Gen. David Johnston



Premier Dave Hancock serves a meal

More than 1,300 served at April Homeless Connect

Attendance at the twice-a-year Homeless Connect remains strong with more than 1,350 people attending the most recent event held in April at the Shaw Conference Centre. More than 350 volunteers and community agencies came together to provide a hot meal, used clothes, health care services, financial advice and information. Premier Dave Hancock lent a hand as well as long-time volunteer MP Mike

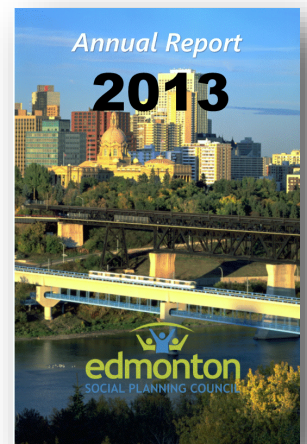
Lake, MLA Deron Bilous and city council members Amarjeet Sohi, Scott McKeen, Bev Esslinger and Andrew Knack. The next Homeless Connect is expected to take place in mid-October.

Low vacancy and high rents continue -- CMHC report

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is forecasting continuing increases in the average cost of a two bedroom Edmonton apartment. The CMHC's second quarter report forecast the average rent in 2014 will be \$1,195, up from \$1,141 in 2013. This makes Edmonton the fourth most expensive city to rent an apartment behind Vancouver in first, Calgary in second and Toronto in third. The report also forecast that Edmonton's rental vacancy rate would remain low at 1.6 per cent, slightly up from 1.4 per cent in 2013.

2013 ESPC annual report now available

The Edmonton Social Planning Council's 2013 annual report was released during the council's annual general meeting in May. The document highlights accomplishments from 2013 and features reports from the council's president, executive director and committees. The full report and financial statements are available at www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca.



Laura Kemp, new Sustainable Food Edmonton ED

Laura Kemp, the past director of the Canadian Diabetes Association, McBride Career Group and SAGE, is the new executive director of Sustainable Food Edmonton. Kemp took over the position from Areni Kelleppan on June 1. SFE is known for its activities in promoting community gardens and delivering programs like Little Green Thumbs, Yard Share and Urban Ag High.

Vancouver hosts national homelessness conference

Registration is now open for the 2014 National Conference on Ending Homelessness at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel in Vancouver BC, November 3-5. The program features pre-conference workshops and 50 concurrent sessions delivered by more than 130 national and international presenters. For more information see www.caeh.ca

Yeg receives age-friendly award

The City of Edmonton received the Age Friendly Alberta Recognition Award in late May for its commitment to creating age-friendly communities. Sponsored by Alberta Health, the award recognizes age-friendly communities that promote healthy, active aging by supporting independence, increasing the accessibility of public buildings, encouraging participation in community events and ensuring access to supports and services. Age-Friendly Edmonton is co-led by the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council. The previous recipient was Strathcona County in June 2013.

Minimum wage increases to \$10.20

Alberta's general minimum wage will increase to \$10.20 from \$9.95 per hour as of Sept 1. The liquor server minimum wage will rise to \$9.20 from \$9.05 per hour. The increase is based on a formula used since 2011 that links the general wage rate to annual increases in Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in Alberta. About 25,700 individuals, or 1.5 per cent of employees in Alberta, earn minimum wage.

Alberta Supports expands service delivery in Edmonton

Residents in Edmonton now have easier access to government supports with the opening of a new Alberta Supports Centre. The office, located in the Argyll Centre, 6325 Gateway Blvd, is a central one-stop-shop for those seeking information, referrals and supports on over 34 programs and over 120 social-based supports provided by Alberta Health and Alberta Human Services. Besides visiting in person, the public can call 780-644-9992 or visit online at humanservices.alberta.ca/cnsat/

ECOHH honors Carol Cass with Lifetime Membership

The Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homeless recognized the work of Carol Cass by presenting her with the 2014 Lifetime Membership award at its AGM in June. For well over a decade Carol has had a major leadership role in ECOHH activities such as the Homefest concert and the annual Homeless Memorial ceremony.



Carol Cass (right)

Volunteer honored for service to seniors

Manuel DaCruz, a long-term volunteer helping seniors at the CapitalCare Dickinsfield facility, was one of five recipients of the 2014 Minister's Seniors Service Awards in

June. Since 2008, DaCruz has given more than 1,500 hours of service to the seniors at Dickinsfield.



90-unit Renaissance Tower opens

TV personality Mike Holmes, the Métis Capital Housing Corporation and three levels of government came together April 29 to officially open Edmonton's newest barrier-free residential complex for Aboriginals, seniors and people with disabilities.

April's official opening of the Boyle Renaissance Project Phase II is the largest project so far for the Métis Capital Housing Corporation. The 90-unit, \$22 million complex was built to meet the needs of Aboriginal people, seniors and people with disabilities while featuring the latest green design features. The complex, located on 95 Street between 104 Avenue and 105 Avenue, features a natural gas-fired combined heat and power micro co-generation system, provided by ENMAX Energy.

The Renaissance Tower is the second phase of the Boyle Renaissance project, a community revitalization plan led by the city. The project provides new housing, social recreation and service facilities for residents in a two-a-half block area in The Quarters. The developer contributed \$6 million to the project while the City of Edmonton, through Cornerstones: Edmonton's Plan for Affordable Housing, contributed \$5.9 million, with \$1.95 million of that from the Government of Alberta plus contributions from the federal government.

Many community partners also supported the project including the Canadian Paraplegic Association and the Boyle Street Community League.

Walters praises ESPC for years of community service

By Vasant Chotai

More than 40 members attended the 2014 Annual General Meeting of the Edmonton Social Planning Council on May 6, among them city councillors Ben Henderson, Dave Loken and Michael Walters, former councilor Janice Melnychuk, a member of the Mayor's Task Force to Eliminate Poverty and former MLA Bruce Miller.

Our council presented this year's Award of Merit for Advocacy of Social Justice to Kate Quinn, the executive director of the Centre to End all Sexual Exploitation (CEASE). She was chosen because she has been one of the most visible advocates for addressing the root causes of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

After highlighting accomplishments in 2013 (*details are in the President's Annual Report*), I mentioned that Edmonton and Alberta are experiencing rapid growth in population and in diversity, extensive infrastructure development, an upswing in economic growth and a shift in leadership. With all that come challenges and opportunities for a community organization such as ours. I am confident that we are ready to play a greater role in the decisions that mould our communities and our future. Susan Morrissey, executive director of ESPC, then outlined specific work that the council will be involved in 2014 and how we plan to accomplish our goals (*details are in the Executive Director's Report, p. 3 of the Annual Report*).

The members then approved last year's meeting minutes and the audited 2013 Financial Statements. The firm of Peterson Walker was appointed as auditors for the coming year. The members also approved the by-law amendments and the Objects as proposed. Current board members elected for another term include: Vasant Chotai, Sumeet Shinde, Jarrod Bayne, Rose Marie Tremblay, Oliver Kamau, Doug Meggison, Janet Kluthe, Anne Stevenson, Meghan Abbott, Darlene Paranaque and Bridget Stirling.

A new member, Candace Jane Dorsey, was nominated from the floor and voted to join the board of this year. This brings the board to its full capacity of 12. Candace is an internationally known writer, editor and communications consultant. A lifelong Edmontonian, Candace has published nine books and many stories, poems, reviews and critical essays, and has received several awards for her community service. (see p. 14) Candace also ran for city council in 2013. We are very proud to have her join the board and add valuable experience and wisdom to our council's work in the community.

As the evening's guest speaker, Councilor Michael Walters of Edmonton Ward 10 provided an interesting keynote address about the ESPC's important role in our city.

"First, I want to send a message of gratitude for all the work the council has done for the City of Edmonton over many decades informing on public policy development, making sure our community is a just and inclusive community," he said.

"My second message is about story telling. Community development work is fundamentally about relationships between people, making sure that we are working together to support each other. How we get to know each other in a creative space is through storytelling, where people talk about their interests, passions and visions for the community. I believe that any successful non-profit organization, working to make their community better, must make that its emphasis."

Vasant Chotai is president of the ESPC



Councillor Michael Walters

Kate Quinn

The first person you call

by Rose Marie Tremblay

When Kathleen Quinn first heard she was this year's recipient of the Edmonton Social Planning Council's Award of Merit for Advocacy of Social Justice she was dressed in orange because of a conference she was chairing for Sexual Exploitation Week of Awareness.

Orange is the colour of freedom movements, the colour of change, energy and the warmth of compassion. Orange is also the colour chosen by anti-trafficking organizations worldwide. The colour describes Kate so well, whose strong voice has called for social justice and human kindness for over 20 years.

Kate, the executive director of the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation (CEASE), was presented with the award at this year's AGM in May because of her work with CEASE to create hope, reduce harm and advocate for individuals, families and communities impacted by sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and social inequality.

We commend Janice Melnychuk for her nomination and heartfelt tribute to Kate. Janice is a former city councillor for Ward 3 between 2001 and 2007.

Kate was born in Missouri and raised in Calgary, the eldest of 12 children. She earned her honours degree in Linguistics at the University of Calgary and volunteered in Sierra Leone with Canadian Crossroads International.

Kate and her husband John Kolkman live in the community of McCauley. In the early 1990s she saw an increase in the number of men cruising the inner city, harassing women and young girls for sex.

Kate and her neighbours organized a traffic count on a street near an elementary school. Within 24-hours, 3,700 cars were counted. Under normal traffic

conditions, the number should have been around 650.

"It turned our community into a shopping mall for predators and buyers of sex," Kate said to police, the media and city council. Public awareness led to the creation of the Prostitution Offenders Program in 1996. The city asked Kate to facilitate the program. CEASE was founded to govern what became known as the John School.

First time offenders, if eligible and to avoid conviction, agree to attend the John School. They must not have a history of violence or child exploitation and they must pay a \$500 fee to attend. During the full-day program, participants hear directly from police, sex trade workers, families, and residents harmed by their actions. According to a report, between 1996 and 2006, 74 per cent of eligible offenders choose to attend the program and less than three per cent re-offended.



Janice Melnychuk (left) presents the Award of Merit to Kate Quinn May 6.

CEASE, under Kate's steadfast leadership, provides tools to help women heal from sex trafficking, and creates bridges out of poverty. Its work includes public education, civic engagement, support and bursaries for clients, counselling, trauma recovery and emergency poverty relief. CEASE also works with other community groups and Project KARE for justice for missing and murdered women.

Kate's faith in the power of grassroots action by concerned citizens inspires us all.

Rose Marie Tremblay is chair of the Award Selection Committee and an ESPC board member.

Low Income transit pass, a tangible way to help eliminate poverty

By John Kolkman

Many low income Edmontonians can't afford a private automobile, and therefore rely on public transit to get to their jobs, medical appointments, or grocery shopping. A low income transit pass for all low income Edmontonians - regardless of their source of income - is a key action the City of Edmonton can take to help end poverty.



John Kolkman

City council recently established a Mayor's Task Force to Eliminate Poverty in Edmonton. In the community consultations leading to the formation of the task force, 18 focus groups were held with low income people. In a document titled "Engaging Edmontonians to Thrive and Prosper: What We Heard," focus group participants identified the lack of affordability of public transit as a major obstacle to their mobility and independence.

Edmonton Transit already provides a discounted pass - priced at 40 per cent of the cost of the adult monthly pass - to residents receiving Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) benefits.

Other citizens, however, with incomes as low - or lower - than those of AISH recipients, are required to pay full fares. This includes people receiving other types of income support such as Alberta Works social assistance benefits. There are many others who are the working poor or adult learners who rely on transit to get to jobs, training, or education programs.

Administrative costs could be kept to a minimum by using the same eligibility criteria for a low income transit pass as are already in place for the city's Leisure Access Program (LAP). Currently, a family of three qualifies for a LAP if they have a total household income of \$36,520 or less. Using a single application process and the same household income limits as LAP will also streamline the process Edmontonians face when accessing services.

A low income transit pass can complement the existing Donate A Ride program, as it does in the City of Calgary which has both programs. The demand for Donate A Ride tickets could be reduced, as some low income residents may prefer the convenience of a discounted monthly pass

compared to the inconvenience of having to obtain Donate A Ride tickets.

Another way revenue losses from a low income transit pass can be minimized is through increased utilization of transit by low income Edmontonians. This increase in ridership has been demonstrated after the introduction of the U-Pass for Edmonton post-secondary students. Edmonton Transit estimates that transit use among students in participating post-secondary institutions doubled since the introduction of U-Pass.

A low income transit pass could reduce transit non-compliance and enforcement costs. Some low income people ride the LRT without paying the fare and end up getting tickets they can't afford to pay. These unpaid fines turn into warrants, which turn into arrests and stints in Remand, all of which are paid for by tax dollars.



Many of the changes needed to end poverty in our city require action by the federal and provincial governments. Implementing a low income transit pass is a tangible way for the City of Edmonton to show leadership in poverty elimination, in a key area within the city's jurisdiction.

Efforts toward the adoption of a low income transit pass received a significant boost recently when the Edmonton Transit System Advisory Board (ETSAB) took up the cause. ETSAB was able to get the issue on the agenda of the Transportation Committee of Edmonton City Council in May. At the meeting, along with a presentation from the

Edmonton Social Planning Council, ETSAB Chair Bruce Robertson pointed out that Edmonton is one of the few major Canadian cities without a low income transit pass. Catherine Bloomfield of the iHuman Youth Society shared the results of a recent research project in which marginalized youth with a monthly transit pass eliminated run-ins with transit security compared to a control group. Several recent immigrants to Edmonton spoke eloquently on how a low income transit pass would afford them an opportunity to better access English as a Second Language classes while improving their economic well-being.

Several city councillors, including Transportation Committee Chair Amarjeet Sohi and Mayor Don Iveson, spoke favourably of introducing a low income transit pass. In the end, the matter was referred back to city staff to work out details and examine the financial impacts. Staff are expected to report back to council by August.

A number of obstacles remain before a low income transit pass becomes a reality. In the past, there has been a tendency to look narrowly at the loss in transit revenue without looking at the off-setting increase in ridership. City council also hopes the provincial government will contribute although this is far from being a sure thing.

The case for a low income transit pass that doesn't discriminate based on source of income is overwhelming. It's time for the City of Edmonton to join other Canadian cities like Calgary that already offer a low income transit pass to their residents. In so doing, the lives of tens of thousands of vulnerable citizens will be improved as they can better afford to take public transit to their jobs, schools, and to access other important community services.

John Kolkman is the Research Coordinator of the Edmonton Social Planning Council



Additional Resources

HarGroup Management Consultants (2007) Low Income Transit Pass Outcomes Survey, Calgary Transit/Vibrant Communities Calgary, www.vibrantcalgary.com

H. Sadowski and R. Chalmers (2011) Financial Barriers to Transit Access. Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Too much info on Police Information Checks?

Do you know of someone who has asked the Edmonton Police Service to provide them with a criminal record check for employment or volunteer work and then had that information used against them?

If you do, the Edmonton Community Legal Centre wants to hear from you. The ECLC is a not-for-profit agency providing free legal services to low income Edmontonians.

Through its work, the ECLC has become aware that EPS's current Police Information Check practice is creating problems for people looking for employment, accessing affordable housing and protecting health and family information.

The number of criminal record checks requested has been increasing in recent years. Individuals are increasingly being asked for this information when

applying for employment or volunteer work, adoption or foster parenting applications, permanent residency, citizenship, education and renting accommodations. In a letter to Edmonton community agencies, Executive Director Debbie Klein wrote that EPS actually provides more than what most people would think of as a criminal record check (a record disclosing only criminal convictions).

EPS's Police Information Check actually includes, charges pending in court, absolute or conditional discharges, warrants or foreign charges, pardoned sexual offences, convictions, and just about any contact a person has had with any police service.

"As an organization, we have many concerns about the practice of including so much non-conviction information in police information checks," said Klein. If you have a story to share, contact Sam Nuako, ECLC, 780-702-1725 (ext. 242) or snuako@ecla.ca

Inside Manmeet Bhullar

Manmeet Bhullar, the MLA for Calgary-Greenway, was sworn in as the Minister of Human Services on December 13, 2013. The fACTivisit wondered what different approaches he would bring to his new role. Here are his answers to some of our questions:

Prior to being elected you were very involved in empowering and encouraging youth. What attracts you to youth issues?

I have always believed that if you get youth to serve their community, they experience the best in themselves and they grow as leaders. If we can channel their energy and enthusiasm to give back to the community and encourage community service rather than turning to harmful activities, we are all better for it.

What in your background prepared you for the role of Minister of Human Services?

A commitment to service is one of my most fundamental beliefs. As a young person, my friends and I worked together on a wide range of service-minded projects, from raising money for the Calgary Inter-faith Food Bank to encouraging people in our community to become foster parents. I think that helped me when I became an MLA and began to work even more to help those in need to sort through issues from child welfare concerns to accessing income supports through my constituency office. I think you learn a lot by just being in the community and listening to people and lending a hand.

Given strong in-migration, low vacancy and rising rents, what needs to be done to get the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness back on track?

Homelessness is a complex issue that requires collaboration from a number of partners and a variety of strategies. We continue to build on relationships with the community to improve services to help vulnerable Albertans. The provincial government understands the need to work closely with our partners to ensure the successful integration of vulnerable Albertans back into society, while maintaining the safety and growth of the community.

We have achieved early success with our 10-year plan to end homelessness. Nearly 9,500 homeless Albertans have been



provided housing and supports since the plan's launch. Over 3,000 have graduated from Housing First programs, with approximately 73 per cent of those remaining housed.

Given the upcoming change in the PC leadership, does the government remain committed to reducing poverty overall and eliminating child poverty in five years? What concrete plans can Albertans expect to see to make this happen?

Eliminating child poverty and reducing overall poverty is a key priority for us. This is a far larger issue – it is about addressing poverty at its root – social issues that affect the safety and well-being of Albertans, including child sexual abuse, family violence, sexual violence, bullying, children's mental health and at-risk children. These families are more vulnerable and at higher risk for addictions and mental health issues. This is why I am committed to making improvements to the child intervention system through my five-point plan.

We are committed to working with and learning from our community partners – many are already developing targeted poverty reduction strategies. We consulted with more than 17,000 people about what is needed from the province to support local solutions and we will use their input to help develop a poverty reduction strategy for Alberta.

But we are not waiting for the strategy to be completed to take action. Human Services' 2014 budget supports increased investment of \$213 million in children, families and vulnerable Albertans.

Should the federal temporary foreign worker program be changed, and if so, how?

The Government of Canada's TFW program remains an important short-term option for helping meet the temporary needs of Canadian employers. Alberta believes, like its Ottawa colleagues, that Canadians and Albertans

cont. on p. 11



Lunch and Learns return in September

The ESPC and the Edmonton Public Library continue to host a series of informative and interesting free noon hour talks from a variety of community organizations and agencies.

What you missed ...



Michelle LaRue

April 9, 2014

Special Projects Manager, Today Family Violence Help Centre

Topic: The Today Centre's Family Violence Help Centre Initiative

Giri Puligandla/Catherine Hunt

May 7, 2014

Homeward Trust Edmonton and Bredin Centre for Learning.

Topic: The Foyer Program: A Pilot Program for Reducing Youth Homelessness in Edmonton



David Prodan

June 4, 2014

Program Manager, McCauley Apartments (E4C)

Topic: Food Security in Edmonton's Inner City

What's coming up ...

Mary Dunnigan

September 24, 2014

Vice President, Strategic Planning

Topic: The Work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Edmonton



Cont. from p. 10

must always have first access to jobs in this country. Both governments are also of the firm belief that the federal program should not be abused. Alberta has mechanisms in place to enforce worksite rules with individual employers and we are open to working with the federal government in enforcing its rules.

It would be inappropriate to speculate on changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker program given that it is a federal program and not within Alberta's authority to change. However, we look forward to hearing details from the federal government on any changes being considered and hope that a proposed path forward does not have a substantially negative impact on our economy, especially small businesses.

You recently heard Sheldon Kennedy speak. What was your reaction?

I was honoured to have Sheldon Kennedy co-chair Alberta's first Minister's Forum on Child Sexual Abuse in May, where he shared his personal story of sexual abuse. He is a very courageous individual for coming forward while raising awareness and giving hope to other survivors. Sheldon offered some key insights on preventing and treating victims of child sexual abuse, which is helping us to build an action plan to prevent child sexual abuse in Alberta.

We need to create safe places for kids to disclose and for families to heal to avoid additional problems such as addictions and mental health issues as they grow older. Sheldon reminded us that social issues, like child sexual abuse, can be difficult to confront; but our action plan will focus on making significant progress in this area. We can always do better for kids and we will keep working at it until all children are safe and free from sexual abuse.

Cont on p. 15

Reflections on the Truth and Recon

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was created in 2009 with the appointment of Commissioners the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Marie Wilson and Chief Wilton Littlechild. As a part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the TRC was established as an independent body to oversee a process to provide former students and others with an opportunity to share their experiences. Seven gatherings were held across Canada, the last one in Edmonton on March 27-30. Here is one person's reflection.

By Alec Stratford

When the Neighbourhood Empowerment Team looks at root causes of crime, often we find that fear is at the root.



We hear from people on a daily basis that they are afraid that they will be victims of crime, fearful of their neighbours and afraid to speak up. This fear often results in folks thinking that somebody else is responsible for producing a safer community. This fear grows through feelings of mistrust, apathy and blame.

Sadly, often blame is placed on the backs of our indigenous community members. Indigenous people are already overly represented in the criminal justice system and more frequently (and unjustly) impacted by victimization, poverty and oppression.

We can trace these issues back through Canada's history of colonization. Canada's *Indian Act* (first written in 1867 and amended several times after that) promised indigenous communities sovereignty and rights, yet it paved the way for policies of cultural assimilation that have been confirmed in the stories of residential school survivors.

I had the great privilege of hearing some of these stories at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Edmonton on March 27-30. I heard about the sexual abuse, violence and of the longing that many survivors had for their own culture, language and beliefs (all of which were initially denied by the church-run residential schools).

As I listened to these stories, I started to see clear connections between our shared history and our current

community issues. This shared history and the intergenerational trauma has led to the struggles that indigenous community members face today.

These ghosts of our shared past have created communities filled with distrust and fear which continues to impact the overall health, wellness and safety of our communities.

As I listened to these stories, my own family's history started to pop up in my head. I started to think about the stories that my grandfather used to tell me of Reverend Samuel Trivett (his grandfather) and his work in Alberta at the turn of the century. He was a missionary sent by the Anglican church to "work" on the Blood Reserve (close to what is now Waterton National Park).

I heard stories about his commitment and dedication to his faith and the good work that he did to build schools that brought Christianity to the indigenous community. It wasn't until I heard the stories of the residential school survivors that it dawned on me what my great, great grandfather had done in Alberta. He was a colonizer; he was creating the infrastructure that led to the cultural assimilations of thousands of indigenous people in Alberta. His work led to the creation of St. Paul's Residential School, which still stands today in Cardston, AB. This revelation was very painful to discover, particularly in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is something that I will carry with me for a long time as I struggle to find my role and my place in the process of reconciliation.

Although I am not my great, great grandfather and I am not responsible for his actions, his story is mine; he is a part of my history and my identity. Just like young indigenous people, I am impacted by our shared history. The difference is that my history is connected to privilege and our indigenous community members' history is connected to oppression.

We are all connected to our past. If you explore your own story, you may or may not find that your history is also connected to the legacy of residential schools.

Regardless, as Edmontonians, we all face the challenge of moving towards reconciliation and we must do this. We must

Reconciliation Commission

do this to stop the fear, we must do this to stop the blame, and we must do this to connect as a community.

The choice that we have is: do we seek to understand our shared history and our roles in reconciliation, or do we see the



Reverend Samuel Trivett on the Blood Reserve, back row, third from the left.

The challenge that each of us faces is to find our role in the process of reconciliation. This challenge is by no means an easy one. It will take critical self-reflection, and it will take looking at our systems from a different perspective.

I know that we can do it! I also know that if we don't do it, we risk having the abuses of the past continue to keep us from truly connecting. If we cannot find our role in the process of reconciliation, then fear will continue to control us, and blame and mistrust will uphold the status quo. However, if we act, if we can find our role in reconciliation, then we can build a greater understanding, better partnerships and better friendships with our indigenous community members. If we do this, then we can achieve a safer, more connected community.

process of reconciliation as something that belongs to someone else?

Now is the time to make this choice. The truth about the past is fresh in our minds, and the stories shared at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are available for all to hear.

We ask you to visit www.trc.ca, explore the stories, connect with them and find your own role. These are small commitments that can lead us down the path to reconciliation. True reconciliation will take decades to achieve, but we must get there and we must be partners in this process.

Alec Stratford is a social worker with the City of Edmonton and a member of a specialized Neighbourhood Empowerment Team working in the 118th Ave area.



Additional Resources

A National Research Centre on Indian Residential Schools is being established at the University of Manitoba to house the statements, documents and other materials gathered by the TRC

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/indigenous_connect/nrc.html

Chansonneuve, D. (2005). Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People. Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Grant, A. (2004). Finding My Talk: How Fourteen Native Women Reclaimed Their Lives after Residential School. Calgary: Fifth House.

Erasmus, G. (2004, March 12). Notes on a History of the Residential School System in Canada. The Tragic Legacy of Residential Schools: Is Reconciliation Possible. Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Milloy, J. (1999). A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System 1879 to 1986. Manitoba: The University of Manitoba Press.

Miller, J. R. *Shingwauk's Vision*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

Candas Jane Dorsey brings wealth of arts and community building experience to ESPC



New ESPC board member Candas Jane Dorsey is not only a widely published writer and inner city community organizer, she's also on the cover of the latest *WestWord* magazine.

Dorsey, who was elected to the board during May's AGM, is a writer of fiction, poetry and non-fiction, with two novels,

three books of short fiction, four books of poetry and numerous publications in anthologies and journals.

She has edited or co-edited four anthologies of Canadian speculative fiction, and is known for her extensive contribution to the encouragement of speculative writing in

Canada. She teaches writing and speaks about literary arts locally and internationally, and was a co-founder of *The Edmonton Bullet* arts newspaper and The Books Collective literary press. She is a freelance writer and editor.

A lifelong Edmontonian, Dorsey has lived in the inner city neighbourhood of Boyle Street with her partner, writer, performer and teacher Timothy J. Anderson, for 12 years. She is committed to social justice and for over 40 years has been an active community and arts advocate, working with arts organizations, community leagues and an Edmonton Police Service citizen liaison committee, to name a few.

She is the recipient of the Alberta Centennial Gold Medal, a City of Edmonton Achievement Award, the Todd Janes Pride Award, an Edmonton Police Service Human Rights Citation and the YWCA Woman of Distinction award.

Dorsey also ran for city councillor in the 2013 municipal election for Ward 6, finishing sixth (out of 16).



Want to volunteer for the ESPC?

Get involved with some of our existing and new volunteer opportunities!

We are looking for people who can:

- research and / or write reviews
- help in the community
- serve on the board
- plan events / fundraise

For more information, visit edmontonsocialplanning.ca and click on **Get Involved**.

Looking for research assistance?

The Edmonton Social Planning Council provides **FREE** research services to social advocacy organizations in Edmonton! Are you seeking publications or statistics in social policy areas such as:

Housing

Transportation

Health

Education

Food Security

Income Security Programs

Urban Issues

Social Services

Women

Disabilities

Poverty

Immigration

Families

Children and Child Care

... and more!

Seniors

Indigenous Peoples

Labour Force

Crime and Safety

If you need a hand finding information about local social issues or related topics, contact Research Coordinator John Kolkman, at 780.423.2031 ext. 350 or by email at johnk@edmontonsocialplanning.ca



Darlene Paranaque

Urban planner, mountain biker, traveler – new board member

Darlene Paranaque holds an Urban Planning degree with the University of Waterloo and is currently pursuing her Masters in Sustainable Urban Development with the University of Oxford. She has a diverse employment background, working in both the private and public sectors in various cities across Canada including Edmonton, Winnipeg, Waterloo, Toronto and Guelph. Currently, she works as a project planner where she exercises project management, preparation and amendments to municipal policy and regulations, public consultation, subdivision design and development approvals.

Darlene has been involved with various social justice groups and has previously been a Director for both an Environmental and Human Rights organization in Waterloo.

This year, Darlene co-founded “Prairie Girls Racing,” Alberta’s first women’s downhill and cross-country mountain biking race team to promote women empowerment and to support women in competitive mountain sport.

Darlene has strong interests in community development and equity. While working with ESPC, Darlene hopes to bridge the gap between social equity and planning and development within the City of Edmonton.

On her spare time she enjoys travelling, hiking, snowboarding and downhill mountain biking.



Terry Jorden

Reporter, speech writer, event planner joins ESPC staff

Communications Officer Terry Jorden is the second most recent addition to the ESPC staff.

He comes with a wide range of communications experience, most recently planning events for Homeward Trust, communications support for Edmonton Public Schools and ten years with Government of Alberta’s Public Affairs Bureau. While in government, Terry was in three different ministries supporting issues such as crime prevention, victims of crime programs, economic development, immigration and employment.

Earlier in his career he worked in communications for several post-secondary institutions after spending five years as a community newspaper reporter. With the council, Terry will be involved in planning the 75th Anniversary celebrations in 2015, maintaining the website and social media channels, editing the *fACTivist* and organizing Lunch and Learns.



He is also active around the city as a piano player providing music for conferences, restaurants, hotels, numerous special private events and seniors housing facilities.

Bhullar cont. from p. 11

What steps is the government taking to reduce the large proportion of Aboriginal children and youth in foster care?

Our government is committed to reducing the number of Aboriginal children and youth in care. We are taking action by making it a priority to keep children and youth with family and loved ones when they are taken out of homes. Kinship care needs to be the first option when remaining with the child’s parents is no longer safe. This will greatly reduce the trauma for the child as they are in a familiar and safe environment. This means more Aboriginal children are being connected with their communities and extended families through focused efforts on finding kinship providers, and building on work with Delegated First Nation Agencies, First Nation Band Designates and Métis communities.

We also recently signed a new agreement with Calgary Police to fast-track police checks and share more information so that we can expedite kinship care applications. We are working on this as well with the Edmonton Police and the RCMP.

Because of this greater focus on family-centred care, these efforts have contributed to a seven-per cent decrease in the number of Aboriginal children in care when comparing the fourth quarter of 2012/2013 with the fourth quarter of 2013/2014.

About the Edmonton Social Planning Council

2014-2015

Board of Directors

Vasant Chotai (President)
Doug Meggison
Sumeet Shinde
Jarrod Bayne
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Oliver Kamau
Janet Kluthe
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Staff Members

Susan Morrissey
Executive Director
John Kolkman
Research Coordinator
Terry Jorden
Communications Officer
Manuel Escoto
Research Assistant
Stephanie Haar
Executive Assistant

The ESPC is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. Our focus is social research – particularly in the areas of low income and poverty.

We are dedicated to encouraging the adoption of equitable social policy, supporting the work of other organizations who are striving to improve the lives of Edmontonians, and educating the public regarding the social issues that impact them on a daily basis.

Our Vision

A healthy, just and inclusive community.

Our Mission

The Edmonton Social Planning Council provides leadership within the community by addressing and researching social issues, informing public discussion and influencing social policy.

As a Member

- support our efforts to remain on the forefront in dealing with social issues
- make it possible for us to distribute our materials freely and widely to all
- receive our newsletters, fact sheets, and other publications
- be eligible to vote at ESPC AGMs and have a say in the direction of the organization
- be eligible to serve on the board of directors
- advertise your non-profit events in the *fACTivist*

Visit edmontonsocialplanning.ca > **Get Involved** > **Member** for more information.

Connect With Us



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