

The Compassion Issue



Compassion through
Refuge

Why Do People Give?

The Health Benefits
of Compassion

Case Study:
The Edmonton
Somali Community

From Camp to Campus:
WUSC's Student
Refugee Program

VitalSigns™ Launch

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Article Submissions
We are always interested in receiving photos, articles or story ideas. Please contact our communications officer, Rebecca Fletcher, at commofficer@edmontonsocialplanning.ca to be added to our volunteer list.

Correction: The cover photo from the Summer Issue was incorrectly credited. Credit goes to © Tom Young 2010.

A full bibliography is available upon request.

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We All Win, When We All Win

Susan Morrissey, Executive Director

We have devoted this issue of the FAcTivist to compassion with the intent to share with our readers some of the tremendous work going on within Edmonton to bring more equity to all citizens in our great city.

"We all win, when we all win" is a phrase that I have used many times over the years to describe the work of the Edmonton Social Planning Council. I think of all the effort ESPC has put into advocating for a low income transit pass, more affordable housing, indexing of minimum wage, and social inclusion. All of these speak to the need for and the rights of all Edmontonians to have access to programs and services that can help them to be active and engaged members of our community.

Recently, I came across a summary of work through the 1000 Women: A Million Possibilities project. The group set a three year goal of raising \$1 million for building a child care centre for the students attending NorQuest College. Early in 2016 the project reached its goal and in 2017 the 1000 Women Child Care Centre will be opened at the NorQuest's Singhmar Centre for Learning. As well as being a state of the art child care facility where students can have their children watched as they study, the centre will also provide hands-on experience for students studying to pursue a career through the NorQuest childcare program. Knowing that post-secondary education is one of the key markers to help address issues of low income, and recognizing that affordable and accessible childcare is very scarce, this project will address barriers to participation.

This is just one of many examples of initiatives that are working towards greater inclusion and participation. As you flip through the pages of our newsletter, I hope you will see and be inspired by the great work that is going on to help all people be full and valued participants in our community.



Compassion through Refuge

Jihan Sharifi

Since the arrival of Syrian refugees began at the end of 2015, large numbers of Edmontonians have gathered to help out in any way they can. From the warm welcome of Syrians at the Edmonton International Airport, to the overwhelming number of donations provided to agencies like the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers upon refugee initial arrival, Edmontonians have demonstrated their welcoming and generous nature.

Once you put this in the context of the economic downturn facing Edmontonians, it should make you even more proud to be a member of this community. Despite the hardships that were facing most people, community members still stood up and gave what they could. For some, that meant sponsoring a family and taking on all the responsibilities that come with that; for others it translated to donating their time, material goods, or funds.

Even local businesses and providers stepped up to help. Dr. Yousif Chaaban, an Edmonton based dentist, began to provide free dental care to Syrian refugees in March. Chaaban made this decision after he learned that the dental care needed for the refugees would not be covered.

In addition, local social enterprises are providing Syrian kids an outlet to learn through games and activities. For instance, Free Footie's soccer program has allowed Syrian children to put to practise both their soccer skills and English language skills through sport.

Syrian children are also being assisted in their return to school this year. The Salvation Army Church and the United Way provided students in need school bags full of school supplies, and among these students were many Syrian refugees.

The donations provided to Syrian refugees are helping them with the many burdens that come with a new life, and this has not gone unnoticed by the newcomers. In an effort to show their appreciation to the community that has been so welcoming and generous, Syrian refugees are giving back through what means they can.

During the Fort McMurray fires, Syrian refugees raised funds to help evacuees. Morhaf Aldiri, a Syrian refugee residing in Edmonton, stated that he understood the loss of Fort McMurray evacuees because of his own loss in Syria. This shared compassion, and desire of Syrians to help those helping them, has unfolded in many ways.

(continued on page 21: Syrians)

Self-Compassion

Vu Le

In order to be compassionate people, we need to be compassionate to ourselves as well. Some days this can seem difficult. For those of us who work towards social justice, it's important to not get bogged down: as Vu Le writes, "fear and anxiety will not lead us to solutions, only integrity and honesty will." Below are his tips for remaining compassionate to yourself as you try to make a difference.

The systemic injustice we are trying to address is extremely complex.

All the diversity we have in society in terms of ethnicity, cultures, religions, gender identity, abilities, histories, languages, etc., and all the intersectional dynamics between these factors, make our society, and our work in addressing systemic injustice, extremely complex. None of us will be able to be completely fluent at navigating all this complexity. There's a whole bunch of important stuff where many of [us] are only on the beginner's end of the spectrum.

We all make mistakes, all of us.

Because of the complexity, all of us make mistakes all the time. We say insensitive things. We make inappropriate jokes. We assume stuff about people. I myself have made, and continue to make mistakes. None of us are immune to perpetrating behaviors that hurt others. We are all great in some ways, and we all need to improve in other ways.



We all slip up.

Just because we make mistakes, it does not mean we're bad people.

We need to move out of the mindset that links mistakes to identity. This mindset just makes all of us feel bad, not want to take any risk, not want to admit to our failures, and become defensive when we are challenged, because none of us want to be seen as a bad person. If we make a mistake, we're not automatically a bad person. Let's extend that grace to ourselves, and to others.

If someone points out a mistake we made, it does not mean they hate us.

Imagine if you have some black bean hummus stuck in your teeth. Wouldn't you rather that someone let you know, so you can take care of it before you go about your day talking to dozens of people? When it comes to heavy topics like privilege and racism, though, we'd rather not have people point out our mistakes, and we sometimes counter-attack when they do it. Let's think, instead, that they're doing us a favor, and thank them.

It takes more courage to admit to a mistake than to deny and defend it.

Being able to admit to our mistakes makes us much more open to reflect on our roles in addressing systemic injustice. Denial and defensiveness are easy. It takes a lot more strength to lower our shields, reflect on our actions and their effects on others, and admit, especially publicly, that we were wrong.



Do I have a little racism stuck in my teeth?

Being a good person is an everyday practice, not a one-time thing.

We don't just suddenly become a good person after attending a racism workshop, white privilege training, gender identity webinar, or whatever. These skills take decades to understand and master, if mastery is even possible. Sometimes we relapse and have to make up lost ground. We must practice every day, including reflecting on our failures and learning from them.

Reprinted with permission from "Hey, you got a little racism stuck in your teeth." by Vu Le, www.nonprofitwithballs.com



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Why Do People Give?

Lexia Simmons

Think of a social issue. Now think of an organization that fights this problem. More than likely, this organization is a non-profit, and they require money to do their work. Fundraising events are a primary source of funds for non-profits. Consequently, fundraising becomes an integral part of the system to provide services to the most vulnerable sectors of society. The goal of this article is to try to determine why people give during times of crises, and how organizations can continue to fundraise when there is a lack of a crisis. To come up with a holistic answer, I interviewed the CEO of the YWCA Edmonton, Jackie Foord, and the Annual and Appeal Fund Development Manager for the Canadian Red Cross, Andres Guterrez. The opinions of these two individuals by no means cover all views surrounding crisis and non-crisis fundraising, but it does provide a glimpse into an often forgotten world.

The first question posed to both Jackie Foord and Andres Guterrez was “what does fundraising mean to you?” Jackie Foord explained that fundraising, for her, was “giving the right message to the right audience on the right day.” Andres Guterrez explained that, for him, fundraising is a means for people to be happy and have access to essential things, a way to “add to the capitalistic world.” The two answers perfectly exemplify their personal fundraising experiences. Jackie Foord acknowledged she very rarely dealt with crises; therefore, the proactive actions of crafting a story and the emphasis on efficient delivery of an event became the building blocks on how the organization fundraises. However, Andres Guterrez, who is primarily responsible for crisis fundraising, thinks of fundraising as a reaction to an already established narrative shaped predominantly by the media. The job of crisis fundraising is to capitalize on the attention.



People respond to crises. How do we encourage compassionate giving every day?

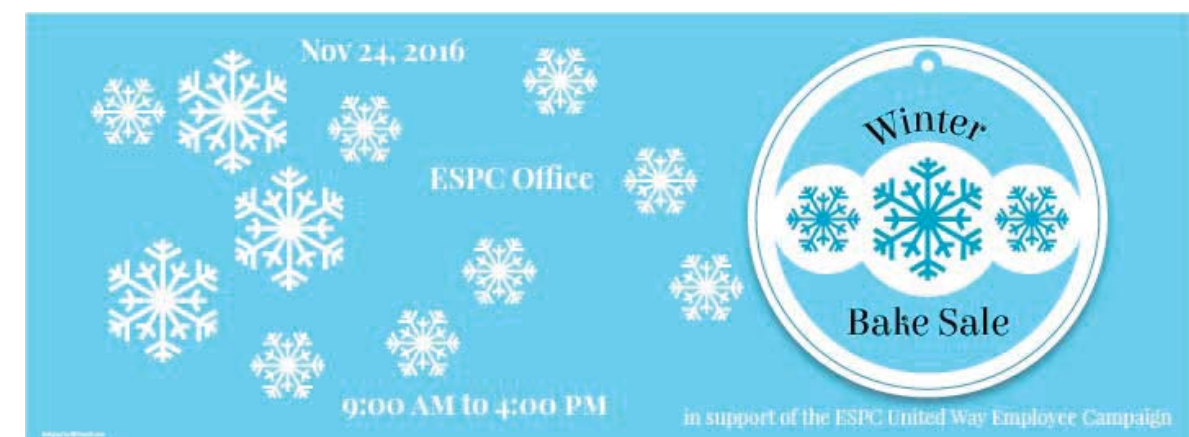
Delving more specifically into why people give, Andres Guterrez claims that in crisis time people give for one of three specific reasons: a fear that the crisis could happen to them, a lived experience and/or knowledge of someone else's experience. Jackie Foord also identified the theme personalization. However, she highlighted other non-crisis fundraising tools. Events that are fun and challenging, as well as well-planned and executed, can be successful because they are educating the public. As an extension of the questions of crisis fundraising turning into non-crisis fundraising, both individuals agreed that education plays a significant role. Organizations must research ways to educate the community about their issue. Jackie Foord had pointed out that there are many non-profit organizations out in the world; therefore, every organization needs a plan to get people to care about their issue.

The reason people give more during times of crises is that it is more personal for them. It hits people harder, faster, and for a prolonged period. Once the crisis dies down, the



When we see suffering around us every day, we can become inured to it. It's up to charities to inspire giving.

organizations are faced with not only finding ways to raise money for their cause but also finding ways to get people to care about their cause in the first place. In extension to this, one way to get people to give during times of non-crises is by educating the community on the organizations' work. Fundraising isn't a simple math problem; it is complex with differing variables, and it is the organization's responsibility to capitalize when a window of opportunity arises and reassess when the window of opportunity shifts.



Edmonton Gives

Ryan Dexter

In April 2016, the Electronic Recycling Association donated 30 computers to Boyle Street Community Services which “will be distributed among the most vulnerable community members accessing Boyle Street’s services.” Currently, Boyle Street Community Services is seeking, as another school year begins, donations of backpacks for community members to store their precious few belongings. Another community organization, the Bissell Centre, is currently running a donations program called Drop Your Gonch, which seeks to collect 2000 pairs of new underwear for homeless men and women . So far the program has collected over 2500 hundred pairs of new underwear, and is still accepting donations online or through drop off.

Last winter, as Syrian refugees were first arriving to Canada, Edmontonians knit warm mittens for Syrian refugees who were not used to the Canadian winters. Loewen’s project was announced online, and shortly after, 30 people reached out to join her initiative. With winter approaching in a few months, there may be a renewed need for comforting those unfamiliar with Canadian winters. This is especially the case considering the Farmer’s Almanac forecasts a “chillier and snowier winter” for Alberta this year.



Still in recent memory is the outpouring of donations Edmontonians and others gave to evacuees from Fort McMurray. Though not as consistently on the news as the Fort McMurray wildfire story was during the summer, residents are still dealing with difficulties with insurance companies . These residents have been denied rental cars, have not had the extent of the damage to their homes recognized, and are considering taking legal action . Despite the generous donations received from Edmontonians and others for the Fort McMurray wildfire, more were reported to be still needed as of May 2016 . Charity Intelligence Canada reports that 139 million dollars were donated by Canadians to the Fort McMurray wildfire evacuees, with much of that money coming from Edmonton and area.

This is a small section of the charitable giving in Edmonton over the past few months. Interestingly, data from statistics Canada’s data from 2004 through 2013 “show [a] 23% increase in giving nationally.” Specifically, “Donations by Albertans rose from \$1.2 billion to \$2.4 billion during that period—a 100 per cent increase.”

Alberta Interprovincial and Secondary Migration: Rates, Context and Profile

Jihan Sharif

The ESPC completed a recent report that analyses the rates, context, and profiles of interprovincial and secondary migrants to Alberta. This report is a supplementary piece to Vital Signs 2017, launching on October 4th , which will be analysing refugee and immigration trends in Edmonton.

In this report, secondary migrants are defined as those who land in Canada as immigrants and subsequently relocate from their original province of landing to another province. In addition, interprovincial migrants are defined as those who move from one province of residence to another province of residence. The information in this report was gathered using the Statistics Canada database, and in particular the Longitudinal Immigration Database. In addition, relevant literature on the topic is presented.

The first section of the report observes the rates of Alberta interprovincial and secondary migration. The data here makes it clear that Alberta has high proportions of both provincial and secondary migration, however, during economic downturns the province experiences negative net migration. In addition, this section observes the retention rates of immigrants that initially land in Alberta. The findings indicate that Alberta has high retention of immigrants initially landing in the province, and has one of the highest retention rates of the provinces.

The second section of the report analyses the context of Alberta interprovincial and secondary migration.

The findings indicate that migration to and from Alberta is closely tied to the province’s unemployment rate, which in turn is closely linked to oil prices. For instance, Alberta experienced declines in net migration for both the 2009/2010 and 2015/2016 years, the same periods that the energy price index dropped and unemployment rates rose.



Alberta bound

(continued on page 21: (Secondary Migration))

The Health Benefits of Compassion

Rebecca Fletcher

When social scientists talk about compassion, they differentiate it from empathy (relating to another's feelings) and altruism (the action that helps someone else). "Compassion is defined as the emotional response when perceiving suffering and involves an authentic desire to help." Many studies suggest that compassion is a natural instinct that evolved in order to help species propagate. As far back as 1871, Charles Darwin suggested that communities "which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring." Recent scientific experiments have shown this is true: rats, chimpanzees, and human infants have all been shown to act with compassion without any expectation of reward. Perhaps even less surprisingly, a 2013 study showed that compassion can be increased with training.

This is good news for everyone: as shown in B. L. Fredrickson's 2008 study, compassion is a self-fulfilling cycle. By being compassionate, we become more compassionate. So beyond the obvious benefits to those on the receiving end, what does compassion get us?



Compassion every day keeps the doctor away

1. More happiness. Not only did Fredrickson's study show that compassion can build

Did you know?

The idiom "kindness is its own reward" is attributed to Biblical King Solomon, and may have been written down as early as 900 BC.

on itself, but it showed that practising mindful compassion can produce increases in "mindfulness, purpose in life, social support, [and] decreased illness symptoms."

2. Stronger immune system.

Thaddeus W.W. Pace, et al, showed in 2008 that compassion meditation can reduce the body's stress-induced immune response. This means that your immune system is spending less energy dealing with internal stressors, and has more energy for fighting disease. It's not quite the cure for the common cold—yet!

3. Better coping. Compassion training can decrease your fear of suffering. Olga M. Klimecki, et al, measured brain responses to witnessing others in distress before and after compassion training. They found that being more compassionate changed activity in parts of the brain associated with good feelings. It made this activity stronger, creating a buffer effect against suffering, enabling us to use our compassion to help others.

4. Tighter connections. Practising compassion can help tighten social bonds—or even just your feelings of connectedness to humanity—letting you double down on health benefits. "One telling study showed that lack of social connection is a greater detriment to health than obesity, smoking, and high blood pressure." But stronger social connections can lead to a 50% increased chance in longevity. Social connections also help boost our immune systems and decrease anxiety and depression.

It feels really good to exercise compassion. Although many of us have been taught that "kindness is its own reward," science is showing that reaching out with compassion has serious health benefits. Doing good, then, is sort of like using your money-back credit card and your points card when you shop. It's having your cake and then getting to eat it. It's helping others and helping yourself—without expecting to.



Compassion can decrease your fear of suffering

From Camp to Campus: World University Service of Canada's Student Refugee Program

Stella Gore

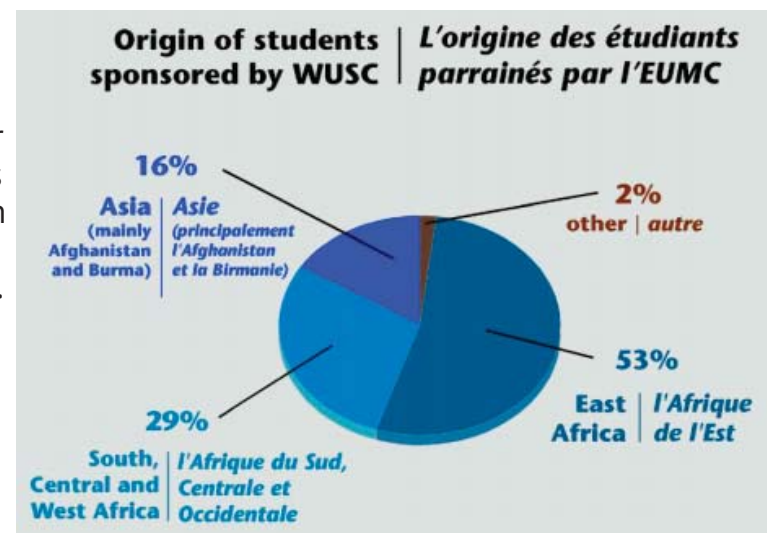
The World University Service of Canada (WUSC) has been supporting refugee resettlement through its Student Refugee program (SRP) since 1978. WUSC currently recruits students from countries of asylum including Kenya, Malawi and Thailand. The program thrives through support from both government and non-government organizations, and is founded on a model of youth to youth sponsorship. Local committees comprised of students, faculty and staff at post-secondary institutions across Canada work to secure funding, and support for sponsored students.

Although sponsoring committees are required to provide student refugees with financial and social support for their initial year of study, the local committees at the University of Alberta and MacEwan University provide sponsored students with support beyond the first 12 months.

In 2007, students at MacEwan University voted in favour of a referendum to support the implementation of the SRP. Each student pays \$2.50 per semester in order to provide funds for housing and tuition for refugee students for two years.

Undergraduate students at the University of Alberta currently pay \$0.96 annually in support of WUSC, through the Students' Union dedicated fee unit. The refugee student fund allows for support of four undergraduate refugee students (one in each year of study). Funds are dispersed such that 66% is allocated to refugee students in their first year, 16% is allocated to students in their second year, 7% is allocated to students in their third year, and 6% is allocated to students in their fourth year.

The program boasts a graduation rate of 92% for sponsored students, and allows them to study and develop valuable skills essential for a career in Canada and abroad. In providing eligible refugees with access to education, the SRP empowers sponsored individuals to effect positive change within their communities. The international nature of the program also allows Canadian students an opportunity to engage and develop a broader understanding of social, political and economic climates across the world.



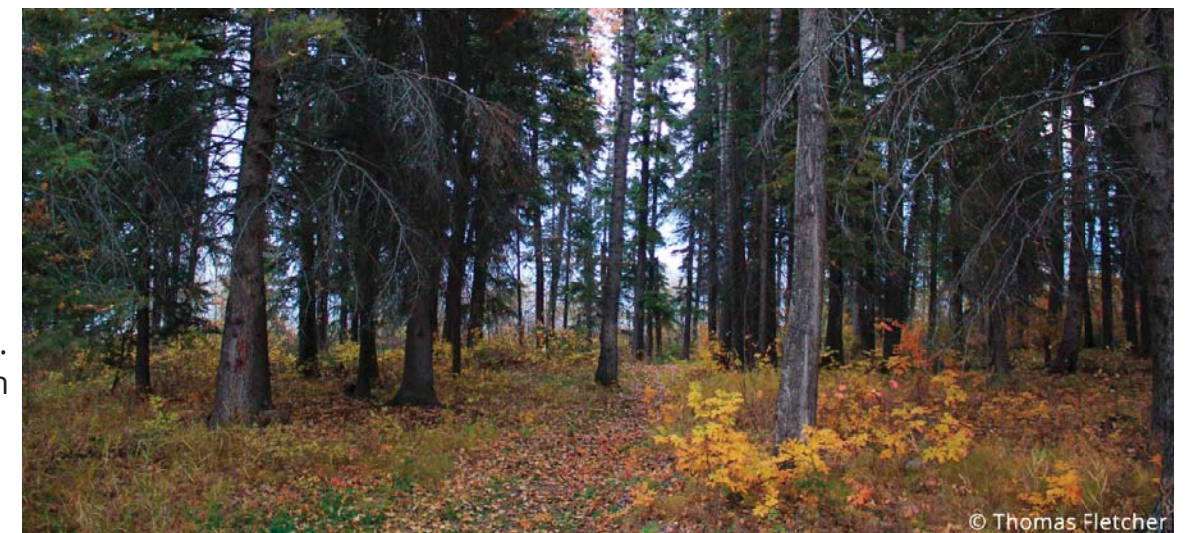
Origins of students sponsored by WUSC

Intimacy with Nature

Rebecca Fletcher

I grew up about 100 metres from a lake in a small town in northern Alberta. Between our house and the lake was a small urban forest, which sheltered us from the frigid winds blowing in off the water. Approximately the size of a city block, composed mainly of spruce trees and wild rose bushes, habitat to squirrels and sapsuckers, my sister and I would play there for hours. While we never quite got over our fear of spiders, we discovered stink bugs and spit bugs and made friends with ladybugs. I still have dreams about this place today, although in my dreams the forest is bigger and wilder. I'm a child again, exploring.

When I was ten years old, a different urban forest, on the outskirts of town, was under threat by developers. I ran a petition to save those trees. It wasn't that I



was against development, but my love for the urban forest across the street from me gave me a unique insight into the value of these spaces. My community-minded parents guided me in my first foray into political action. I took the petition to church and to school. One of my classmates declined to sign, since his father was one of the developers. This was a harsh awakening for me: I hadn't seen the developers as people with feelings, opinions, and needs before.

That forest is now a neighbourhood, but the one across the street from my childhood home still stands. To say my love for the environment is due to that forest is probably oversimplifying things; as a family, we also explored the local provincial park, canoed in the bays, grew our own food, composted, recycled, and always drew on both sides of the paper.

(continued on page 22: Nature)

Case Study: The Edmonton Somali Community

Ryan Dexter

In February of 2016, the Edmonton Somali community united to confront radicalization amongst their youth. Specifically, the Somali community wanted to talk about the precursors to radicalization, such as economic deprivation and alienation. Unemployment is seen as a major barrier for members of the Somali community, and advocates suggest education can help with this social issue. On the same topic of social issues and safety, Indigenous and Somali communities came together in July 2016 to create safer downtown spaces. Specifically, the issues of racism, poverty, gang violence and drugs were discussed as was public safety with the purpose of providing a list of recommendations to the municipal and provincial government for how to make the downtown area safer. This partnership is of particular interest given that both communities were providing the same services independently before, and now can share resources to better provide for their communities and enhance public safety in the downtown area for all citizens.

The Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, which was involved in the above mentioned partnership, is dedicated to giving “back to the community in order to uplift the community and make new Somali Canadians good citizens that contribute to our collective wellbeing.” Several types of programs, such as settlement, after school, seniors’ and women’s programs, as well as document translation services, help to develop the community through social services. The settlement programs, in particular, provide direct services to newcomers, including information sessions. Importantly, by developing the community and helping Somali Canadians become contributing members of their community, the risk of radicalization, drugs, violence, and poverty is lessened.

The Africa Centre of Edmonton also helps to develop the community through social services, including the Youth Empowerment Group (Y.E.G.). The Youth Empowerment Group aims to encourage self and community empowerment from within by organizing youth-led discussion groups. Currently, the Y.E.G. is planning their first youth-led conference. Further, the Africa Centre’s Youth Leadership and Outreach program provides assistance for people who are homeless or are near homelessness, stressed and uncertain, experimenting with drugs, or simply looking to get connected to local community events.

The partnership between Somali and Indigenous communities to make the downtown area safer for the public is an expression of the work that community organizations do all year long. Non-profit community groups, such as the Africa Centre and the Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, serve their communities by helping to develop their culture and promote personal development. All across the lifespan, including all different types of life’s problems, these community organizations offer social services to empower people and resolve problems. This in itself is an incredible act towards creating safety in public spaces like the downtown area, and surely promotes lifestyles devoid of gang violence, poverty, drugs, and racism.

The partnership between Somali and Indigenous communities to make the downtown area safer for the public is an expression of the work that community organizations do all year long.

News Briefs

#MakeltAwkward

After a video showing two men calling out racial slurs in downtown Edmonton went viral, the victim of the attack and Mayor Don Iveson started an anti-racism campaign. #MakeltAwkard calls on bystanders and victims of racism to gently confront offensive speech wherever they see it, hear it, or experience it. Tweets Bridget Stirling, “My favourite strategy is to ask the person to explain their racist comment or joke.” [Read the whole story on the CBC!](#)

Rogers Place Opening

Opening this September, the new Rogers Place arena has changed the face of downtown Edmonton. They’ve started their hiring practices off by looking to inner-city social agencies, hiring 175 part time staff.

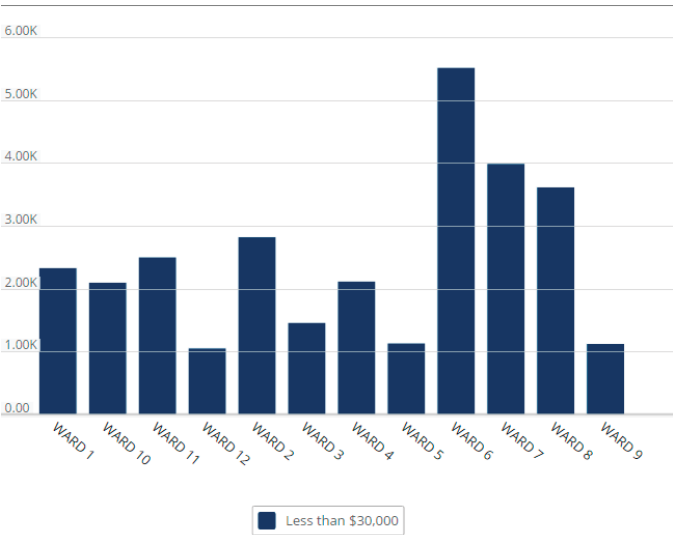
Still, community groups worry about the overall impact the arena will have on the neighbourhood and the people who live there. [For more information, visit the CBC.](#)

Poverty Results: 2016

The 2016 Edmonton census results are in, and they show 29,908 people making \$30,000/year or less. The ward with the largest number of low-income people is Ward 6; the neighbourhood with the largest number of low-income people is Oliver, followed closely by Garneau, then Downtown and Boyle Street. These four neighbourhoods make up 13% of the total low income people in Edmonton. [For more statistics from the census, visit the City of Edmonton’s Open Data Portal.](#)

The Action Lab

The Skills Society has opened a new resources for social justice innovation, The Action Lab. “A lot of the social sector was set up a century ago and was built up in the postwar period—when rotary phones were around. Now, a lot of the social programs are still based on the rotary phone, when what we need is a smartphone,” says executive director of Social Innovation Generation, Tim Draimin. The founders are trying to change the status quo of social agencies by opening up a place for innovation. [Read more at Avenue Edmonton!](#)



A chart created from Edmonton’s Open Data Portal showing the population of people in each ward making less than \$30,000 per year.

Social Justice Events Review

Outdoor Solar-Powered Film Showing: FernGully

This new column in the fACTivist highlights social justice events in the community. Each issue will feature a review of an event and recommended reading.

Rebecca Fletcher

On August 24 , I had the pleasure of attending a viewing of one of my favourite children’s films, *FernGully: The Last Rainforest*, outdoors at the Legislature. The event was hosted by Solar4All and Greenpeace Edmonton. The film was powered by batteries that had been charged using solar panels and bike generators.

FernGully came out in 1992, a time when environmentalism was entering its third wave: environmentalists were increasingly working with corporations and NGOs directly rather than directing their efforts at governments . In keeping with this movement, *FernGully* is directed at a general audience, asking us to consider how we personally affect the environment.

FernGully is about a colony of fairies who come into contact with humans for the first time since times of legend. Their oral history tells of a maleficent being, Hexxus, who helped corrupt the humans and turn them against their roots in nature. To stop his agenda of destruction, ancient fairies trapped Hexxus in a giant tree.



As dusk falls, the movie begins with an oral history of the fairies’ relationship with humans, and of humans’ with nature.

Tragedy strikes when the contemporary humans arrive: they have come to log the forest, and unknowingly release Hexxus, who directs the loggers toward FernGully for his revenge.

Almost 25 years later, the environmental movement is under pressure. Climate change looms. The Canadian Government has made the environment a priority again, changing the name of Environment Canada to Environment and Climate Change Canada, and signing the Paris Agreement, which aims to curtail rising global temperatures . *FernGully* is still as relevant today as it was in 1992, reminding us about the beauty and magic of nature, and asking us to commit to preserving the natural world.

The weather on the day of the viewing was cool with occasional rain showers, with about 50 people in attendance. As we sat huddled under blankets swatting mosquitoes, a palpable feeling of companionship suffused the cool evening with warmth. Volunteers passed around popcorn, and the atmosphere changed from joyful to sombre and back again, as the witty



*“Can’t you feel its pain?”
Crysta the fairy teaches Zac the human, about respecting nature.*

Recommended Reading

Dr. Seuss. (1971). *The Lorax*. New York, NY: Random House, Inc.

Jagtenberg, Tom, & McKie, David. (1996). *Eco-impacts and the greening of postmodernity: New maps for communication studies, cultural studies, and sociology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Kolbert, Elizabeth. (2014). *The sixth extinction: An unnatural history*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company LLC.

Pollan, Michael. (2006). *The omnivore’s dilemma: A natural history of four meals*. New York, NY: The Penguin Group.

dialogue drew the dark story forward. If you were unable to make it to this event, I recommend that you watch *FernGully* at home. It’s available on DVD, BluRay, and on Netflix Canada. Perhaps, like me, you will begin touching trees to see if you can feel their pain. You might get the Batty Rap stuck in your head. In the end, though, you will be moved deeply.

Get to Know an ESPC Summer Student

Each issue, one staff member will interview another. This is your opportunity to find out what drives the ESPC staff in their efforts to create positive social change in their community. In this issue, Research Officer Jihan Sharifi gets to know HR Student Stephie Fenelon, who became a Canadian citizen this August.

JS: What’s your favourite ’90s jam?

SF: My favourite voices of all the time are Celine Dion and Whitney Houston. It’s impossible to hear these voices and not be moved by them. Favourite song of Celine Dion: “Pour Que Tu M’aimes Encore”; favourite song of Whitney Houston: “I Look To You”

JS: What was the last gift you gave someone?

SF: It was this morning, a kiss to my mom.

JS: What is the funniest thing that has happened to you recently?

SF: Besides this interview? [Laughs.]

JS: What do you want to be when you grow up?

SF: A singer. [Grins.] I mean, I’ve always wanted to be a singer since I was little because singing was for me the best way to express my feelings, it is my shelter and therapy. I also believe that being a singer is a precious gift to yourself and others. Now the question is: CAN I REALLY SING?

JS: What is your proudest moment at the ESPC in the last two months?

SF: My proudest moment would be my entire journey with an organization like the ESPC. It’s a good feeling and inspiration to be working with people who are dedicated to what they are doing and choose to make a difference in their community by using their talents and knowledge.



Board Member Profile

Gwen Feeney

Gwen is a researcher and lawyer dedicated to the advancement of social justice. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (with Distinction) in Political Science from the University of Alberta, a Juris Doctor from Queen’s University, and a Certificate in International Public Law from the Bader International Study Centre in the United Kingdom. She also studied in Mexico and the Netherlands and taught English in Taiwan prior to law school.

Gwen previously worked as a corporate lawyer in the Calgary offices of two international law firms and in political and policy research and communications for the Alberta NDP caucus. She now works for Alberta’s largest union as an economic, political and legal analyst



and advisor. Over the years, she has developed particular interest and expertise in social policy, including housing, poverty reduction and disability issues, health policy, access to justice, Indigenous issues, and human rights.

Gwen has extensive volunteer experience with community organizations including Calgary Legal Guidance, the United Way and the Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary. She formerly held leadership roles and provided strategic direction on major fundraising campaigns for social service organizations and as the President and Vice President of two federal riding associations in Calgary.

Would you like help make a difference in Edmonton? To apply for a board position, please visit our website at <http://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/index.php/about-us-2/board-of-directors>.

Upcoming Social Justice Events

To have your event featured here, please email Rebecca Fletcher at commofficer@edmontonsocialplanning.ca. The fACTivist is published quarterly, so we are now accepting events for December through February.

Light the Night Edmonton: The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada Fundraiser	Sep 24, 2016 5:00 PM	Hawrelak Park Heritage Amphitheatre	http://bit.ly/2ci0TIP
Pecha Kucha Night 26	Sep 29, 2016 7:00 PM	Metro Cinema at the Garneau	http://bit.ly/2bVvYi
Salvos Prelorentzos Peace Awards 2016	Sep 29, 2016 7:00 PM	Edmonton City Hall	http://bit.ly/2bzWGWO
4th Annual Gratitude Stew at Sunbelly Wellness	Oct 14, 2016 6:00 PM–2:00 AM	9945 85 Ave NW	http://bit.ly/2cen2CN
Homeless Connect (Volunteer Opportunity)	Oct 23, 2016 8:00 AM–3:00 PM	9629-176 Street	http://bit.ly/2c8LbIs
Bake Sale in Support of the United Way	Nov 24, 2016 9:00 AM–3:00 PM	ESPC Office #37, 9912 106 St	http://bit.ly/2c8Ky1z

Join us for the report launch of

VitalSigns®

OR PICK UP YOUR COPY IN THE EDMONTON JOURNAL ON OCT. 4TH

Edmonton Community Foundation

edmonton SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL

October 4th, 2016 - 11:30 a.m.

Stanley Milner Library - 7 Sir Winston Churchill Square, Edmonton Room A LIGHT LUNCH WILL BE SERVED

Find out:

- Why Immigration is important to Edmonton
- How Immigrants and Refugees contribute to our economy
- How Edmontonians feel about newcomers
- How newcomers struggle to fit in
- How to create a welcoming community

(continued from page 3: Syrians)

Other Syrian refugees are giving back to their community by sharing their culture. During this year’s Heritage Festival, Syrian refugees showcased their diverse culture through dance, storytelling, and sharing images of their homeland with festival patrons. In addition, following the immense help from their sponsors, Syrian refugees gave back to them by sharing their food, music, and dance in an evening of festivities.

Even upon initial arrival, Syrian refugees expressed and demonstrated their longing to give back to the country and community that has assisted them. Fayyad Abdulhi, a Syrian refugee residing in Charlottetown, started volunteering only three weeks after arriving in the city. In Edmonton, Narin Qaragoulr is eager to learn English so she can put her skills as a psychologist to use in order to help others.

While many Syrian refugees dream of the day they can give back to Edmonton, in many ways they already have and are giving to this community. Their arrival alone has helped exhibit what a generous and inclusive city Edmonton is. Edmontonians have risen to the role as gracious hosts, welcoming and helping refugees. In response, Syrian refugees—having felt cared for and welcomed by their host community—have demonstrated their desire to help in their new city. In the end, this is what compassion is all about.

(continued from page 9: Secondary Migration)

This section also observed unemployment rates by migration status and found varying unemployment rates depending on immigration status. First, Canadian-born residents and immigrants landed in Canada more than 10 years have similar rates. Second, immigrants landed more than five to 10 years in Canada have fluctuating unemployment rates. Finally, immigrants landed in Canada five years or less have the highest unemployment rates of the groups listed.

The third section of the report analyses the profiles of Alberta interprovincial and secondary migrants. In terms of where migrants are coming from, the findings indicate that Alberta gains significant portions of migrants from most provinces, while predominantly gaining from Ontario, Quebec, the Prairies, and British Columbia. In addition, the demographic data indicates that migrants to Alberta are mostly young individuals, and that slightly more males to females migrate to the province.

The final section of the report looks at the profiles of secondary migrants by Immigrant Admission Category. The findings indicate that the majority of secondary migrants to Alberta fall under the combined economic class categories, while the refugee class and family class make up the third and fourth highest portion of migrants respectively.

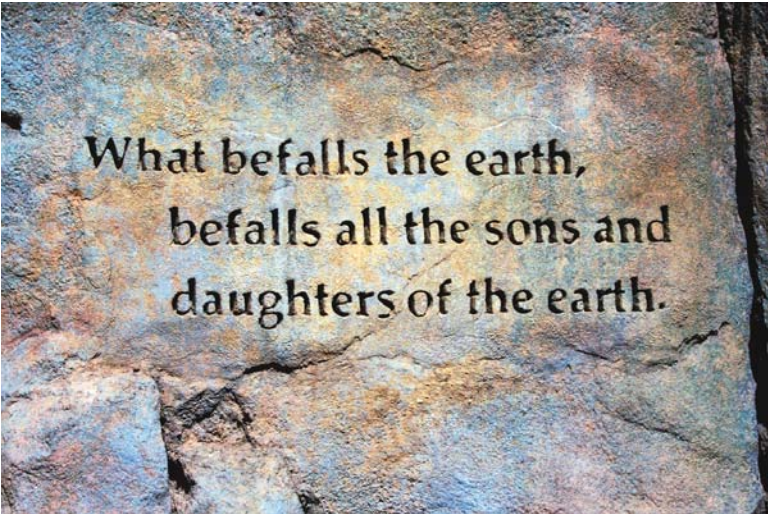
In conclusion, this report makes evident that migrants are moving to Alberta predominantly for economic reasons. In addition, the report shows that migrants are arriving to Alberta from diverse parts of Canada. Finally, the high retention rates of immigrants initially landing in the province indicate that immigrant serving agencies in Alberta are successful at integrating immigrants into the province.

(continued from page13: Nature)

Now that I’m an adult, I remember my intimacy with nature and it inspires me to continue green practices here in Edmonton. I still recycle and save scrap paper to use for to-do lists, and my collection of canvas shopping bags would be the envy of any fashionista environmentalist. I walk to work and would far rather take the LRT to Kingsway Mall than drive. I share my passion for the environment with my nieces and nephews. In particular, my sister’s eldest is determined to “save all the animals”.

Imagine my surprise when I found a study correlating compassion for people, an “other-oriented tendency,” to compassion for the environment . “Compassion elicits the morality-driven motivation to prevent and to relieve suffering which should also be applicable to nature and the environment.” This leads me to wonder if it’s possible to go the other way: did my early-life experiences with the environment and environmentalism shape my compassion towards people?

Today, the environmental movement is focused both on the Earth itself and on the negative impacts to humans caused by climate change and reckless environmental practice. It’s easy to see that compassion for those suffering from drought or failed crops could lead to compassion for the environment. The Dalai Lama writes, “Our planet is our house, and we must keep it in order and take care of it if we are genuinely concerned about happiness for ourselves, our children, our friends, and other sentient beings who share this great house with us. If we think of the planet as our house or as ‘our mother’—Mother Earth—we automatically feel concern for our environment.” When I return to my hometown, I visit the urban forest across the street from my parents’ house, and I’m filled with gratitude for my particular childhood. A sense of renewal comes over me, and I bring this feeling back home to the people and the environment here in Edmonton.



Ted Perry (commonly attributed to Chief Seattle)

More Resources

Carson, Rachel. (2002). *Silent Spring*. (40th anniversary edition). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Deaton, Jeremy & Lee Mina. (2016, August 26). Four infographics that show how climate change is affecting your health: From carbon to coffin. Retrieved from <https://thinkprogress.org/four-climate-health-infographics-99784261f442#.db0nmjhqh>

ASAP. (n.d.) 5 inspirational videos about the environment & compassion. Retrieved from <http://www.pledgeasap.com/5-inspirational-videos-about-the-environment-compassion-asap/>

An illustration of a person with dark hair, seen from behind, sitting at a desk. The desk is cluttered with various items: a large computer monitor, a keyboard, a mouse, a calculator, a smartphone, a tablet, a pair of headphones, a camera, a notebook, a pen, a pair of glasses, a cup of coffee, and some papers. The person is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt. The background is a solid green color. Overlaid on the illustration is text in a black, serif font.

The Edmonton Social Planning Council provides free research organizations in Edmonton! If you are seeking publications or statistics in social policy areas and need advice, email our research officer at researchofficer@edmontonsocialplanning.ca

Planning Council advice to social advocacy

designed by freepik.com

Volunteer now!

Are you concerned about social issues? Do you want to give back to the community? The Edmonton Social Planning Council is always looking for volunteers to help with its research and outreach endeavours. We will do our best to align your interests, availability and skills with the tasks we offer. We occasionally call on our volunteers to act as note-takers, photographers, and fund-raisers.

Visit our website (<http://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/index.php/about-us-2/volunteer-opportunities>) to learn more about our volunteer opportunities and to sign up today.

If you'd like to join our ranks but don't see your perfect task, please consider becoming a member or writing to our volunteer officer to put your name down as a volunteer-at-large.



About the Edmonton Social Planning Council

2016-2017 Board of Directors

- Candas Jane Dorsey
- Gwen Feeny
- Maxwell Harrison
- Erin LaRoque
- Doug Meggison
- Ashley Salvador
- Peter Schalk
- Alexandra Seaman
- Cody Spencer
- David Trautman
- Ben Whynot

Staff Members

- Susan Morrissey, Executive Director
- John Kolkman, Research Coordinator
- Stephanie Haar, Executive Assistant
- Rebecca Fletcher, Communications Officer

The Edmonton Social Planning Council is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan social research organization, with registered charitable status. Our focus is social research, particularly in the areas of low income and poverty. ESPC is a source of knowledge and expertise on social issues within our community.

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 community in which all people are full and valued participants.

Our Mission

Through rigorous research, detailed analysis, and community engagement, we deepen community understanding of social planning issues, influence policy, and spark collaborative actions that lead to positive social change.

Membership

Become a member! As a member, you:

- support our efforts to remain on the forefront in dealing with social issues
- are free to borrow books and other publications from our resource library
- make it possible for us to distribute our materials freely and widely to all
- receive our newsletters, fact sheets and other publications on a regular basis via email or regular mail
- can vote at ESPC annual meetings and have a say in the direction of the organization
- become eligible to serve on the board of directors

Join today at <http://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/~edmont65/index.php/membership-fees>

Connect with us on
social media!



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