

# ALBERTA Street News

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Congratulations to Alberta Street News writer Sharon Spencer and Darryl Bugle, who were married on October 26 at the University Hospital in Edmonton. Darryl was admitted to the hospital on October 25, so rather than cancel the wedding, the service and following lunch was held in the Maze Room on the 4th floor with Rev. Janice Dodds officiating. Photo by Linda Dumont

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# ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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**Sharon and Darryl Bugle by  
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**THE VIEWS  
PRESENTED ARE THOSE  
OF THE CONTRIBUTORS.**

## Gone but not forgotten- Cindy Gladue

By Vivian Risby

How did he get away with murder? He was a truck driver. How many people had he had killed and no one can prove it? I am the one who had said this. I wonder what their family said when he was on the news. Do they care, or if his wife knew always about him, I wonder?

My sister Donna - I wonder how she deals with the pain when she sees all of the late Cindy's kids and Cindy did not see her grandchild. My sister is a strong woman plus she cries at night, wondering did Cindy cry for mom when she was dying and thinking of her kids and hoping someone could save her. Now my sister needs funding to go to Ottawa with three kids. She is going for the appeal. The person's name is Bradley Barton. It was in the Edmonton Journal that he got away with murder. What happened to justice? All we have is the pain in the family. I wonder why I am always in pain. Why do we always feel this way? Donna Mcleod will be in court. It was on the news now. We wait until the high court to tell Donna when she has to do this again.

There is no justice if you're native!!!

## Murder is murder

By Linda Dumont

The Supreme Court of Canada will review the case of the Ontario trucker, Bradle Barton, involved in the death of Cindy Gladue who was killed on June 22, 2011. There judges will decide whether Barton should be retried for her murder. He was inititally charged with murder and at the trial he admitted to causing her death, but said it was the result of consensual sex when he thrust his fist into her vagina. She bled to death from an 11 cm. tear in the vaginal wall. But Gladue had an incapacitating level of alcohol in her system. Barton was found not guilty of murder and acquitted on charges of manslaughter. A new trial was ordered in 2015 after Alberta's Court of Appeal agreed the trial judge erred in instructing the jury and allowing evidence to be heard about Gladue's sexual history and opened the door to assumptions about her race and sexist myths and stereotypes. This could have clouded the jurors judgment. During the trial Gladue was referred to as a 'prostitute' 25 times and as a 'native' 26 times. At the trial, a judge allowed the Crown to bring Gladue's preserved pelvic tissue into the courtroom as evidence, causing national outrage. The result of the new trial in this sex case could redefine consent. Muriel Stanley Venne, president and founder of Advancement of Aboriginal Women, believes the hearing is precedent setting. She said, "This is an opportunity for Canada and the provinces and every citizen and every woman in this country to realize that if the Bradley Barton acquittal stands, they are in jeopardy. This is an opportunity that was never before given to us as a county and the citizens of Canada to do the right thing."



ASN Staff Writer Pedro Schultz (above) and ASN Vendor Clifford Mitchel (above right) recently received their ASN jackets from ASN Media Relations Coordinator John Zapantis, who created the new look ASN logo design for the many jackets that were funded by him.

Photos by John Zapantis

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# November

By Joanne Bengier

There are those who like November. I don't think Prince Charles is among them. He will be 70 this November but he chose to celebrate his birthday on May 22 when the weather was nice. Now all we have to do is follow his example and relocate to better weather. The snowbirds are doing just that and will have no snow to shovel. The homeless and the incarcerated ill have no snow to shovel. Between these two groups is the middle class. They shovel snow.

November 3 is the first Saturday in November which used to be celebrated as Lil Abner's Sadie Hawkins Day. This was the one day of the year when old fashioned gals could ask a guy for a date. So ladies, don't be shy. Ask that elusive guy for a date today.

November 4, Daylight Saving Time ends so we have a night with an extra hour in which to party Dogpatch Time style with kick-a-poo joy juice. Time is catching up with us as shadows lengthen.

November 9, 1917 the glamorous Mata Hari was shot at the Luzure prison for high treason as a counterspy. The lesson is 'Beauty is as beauty does.' And little girls daydream about growing up to be beautiful spies

who will never be forgotten. RIP Mata Hari.

November 11 is Remembrance Day. The war that was to end all wars ended on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Wear a poppy on your left side over your heart to show you remember and appreciate all who have fought for our freedom.

November 20 is Universal Children's Day and November 23 is National Adoption Day for every child deserves a second chance.

Do something wonderful for a child.

November 21 is World Hello Day. Don't be shy. Greet ten strangers today with a friendly smile and that magic word, 'Hello.'

November 22 is the fourth Thursday in November, which makes it U.S. Thanksgiving Day and who can trump that? Friday after Turkey Day is Black Friday when store sales spill over into Canada and if you can't shop in person, this is followed by Cyber Monday with all its internet bargains. Christmas shopping season has officially begun with Christmas only a month away.



## Remembrance Day

By Joanne Bengier

We all have our Remembrance Day traditions. I wait to buy my poppies until cadets come to my door. Then I buy two, one for my everyday walking and one for my dress up jacket. I pin them on securely as the military men do. I put the pin through the poppy and the jacket, then pull it back and reinsert it so the pin point just catches the edge of the poppy. Before I learned this trick, I was forever losing my poppies.

On the morning of November 11th I visit my husband's grave and give him one of my

poppies. I got this idea from a TV newscast where people placed poppies on the grave of the Universal Soldier. My husband wasn't a War Vet but it wasn't his fault. He served in the RAF during peace time.

I come home and turn on the TV to watch the National Remembrance Day ceremony in Ottawa. I join in for the minute of silence and feel connected with people around the world who are doing likewise. I feel the mixture of sadness, pride and patriotism that links us all.

The pipe band plays. The laying of the wreaths by and for various veterans' groups is a touching sight as is the Silver Cross Mother. Then we have the benediction. Last year it was the Irish blessing that ends with, "May god

hold you in the palm of his hand." "God Save the Queen" is sung and finally we have the parade of veterans with all of their medals.

Canadian Remembrance Day is a stunning tradition and I feel misty eyed when the program ends. I am proud to be a Canadian as I watch how we honour those who sacrificed in the name of freedom, but I am haunted by what one soldier said, "We volunteer but our families are drafted." I see those left behind holding the pictures of the beloved who gave his life for his country and think of how they have to live with this loss down through the generations.

## Will I be homeless

By Joanne Bengier

These days homelessness exists in all nations. Shelter Scotland reports that "every 18 minutes a household become homeless in Scotland." We are all haunted by the fear that we may end up homeless if.....

The keynote speaker at the 2018 Global Street Summit was Suzanne Fitzpatrick, who had a PhD in youth homelessness and claims it is predictable, not random. She answered the question, "Can homelessness happen to anyone?" with a resounding, "We've all heard we are just three paycheques from homelessness. Don't believe that hype" Working with Glen Bramley and backing up their studies with government surveys, she reached the conclusion that homelessness is predictable.

In Scotland if you are a white male and come from a rich home in a rural area, graduated from university and are living at home with no partner or children, there is less than a 1% chance you will be homeless at age 30. On the other hand, if you are a female of ethnic or mixed race and come from a poor home in the city, left school at 16, had spells of unemployment and are living as a single mother and renter at 26 there is a 71% chance you will be homeless at age 30.

Fitzpatrick said the most important factor is childhood poverty. 50% of the homeless had experienced childhood poverty and many said they were hungry at the ages of 10 and 16. Fitzpatrick explained that as well as being deprived of material needs like food and clothing, poorer households are more likely to have a mentally ill mother, domestic violence and substance abuse issues as poverty wears down the resilience of the family. Growing up in a poor, troubled household makes the transition to adulthood harder and the risk of homelessness increases. Troubled teenagers, who end up in care, are excluded from school or are seriously into drugs increase their risk of future homelessness.

The inequality doesn't end there. Should they actually become homeless, people who grew up poor will have little or no social support and end up sleeping rough whereas families buffer homelessness for the more affluent, who can usually turn to a friend or relative if they need emergency accommodation.

At the end of her troubling presentation, Suzanne Fitzpatrick gave no magic formula for eliminating homelessness.

## Novena

Prayer of the Blessed Virgin  
(Never known to fail)

Oh most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendour of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin assist me in my necessity.  
Oh Star of the Sea, help me and show me that you are my mother.  
Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, I humbly beseech thee from the bottom of my heart to help me in my necessity (make request).  
There are none that can withstand your power. Oh Mar, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. (3 times). Holy Mary I place this prayer in your hands. (3 times).

Say the prayer for three consecutive days and then you must publish and it will be granted to you. J.B.

## DOGS with WINGS providing the blind and disabled with mobility services since 1996

By John Zapanitis,

They say, "A dog is a man's best friend." Over at DOGS with WINGS ASSISTANCE DOG SOCIETY that adage certainly rings true. The international dog training school has lived up to its reputation in providing Alberta's blind and the disabled with dogs that have been especially trained in providing mobility and companion services while helping to enhance the quality of life for those who depend on them.

Elisa Irlam is one of the many guide dog mobility instructors who trains and prepares dogs to provide mobility and companion services to the blind and the disabled. Irlam took her training to become a guide dog mobility instructor at a dog guide training school in Ontario called Canadian Dog Guides for the Blind. She successfully completed a three year apprenticeship program that taught her an array of dog training skills.

In an interview with ASN she elaborated on her involvement with the program.

Irlam said, "Basically you start working and it's sort of like on the job training. So there's theoretical background. Then of course the technical aspects of learning how to train guide dogs, healthcare of dogs, working in the kennels and learning that aspect, teaching the clients all of that aftercare of clients. Once they've graduated with their guide dog, going and visiting them. They also interview clients. All of that is involved within the apprenticeship."

The non-charitable organization obtains the guide dogs from their breeding program just

prior to training and preparing them in assisting the blind and disabled. Irlam elaborates on the breeding program and how the process unfolds prior to preparing the pups for their challenging journey to one day serve the blind and disabled. Irlam said, "The dogs start their guide dog training at five weeks old. We mostly use dogs from other guide and service dog schools. So it's very enclosed, but we get them shipped to us. We do it sort of internationally with all the other schools. We're part of a breeding co-operative and then a lot of the pups are born in what we call a whelping home."

The puppies are offered to volunteer foster families who provide a whelping home, while providing caring and support in preparing them for their future training. Mothers of these puppies usually give up their litters after the 63rd day, prior to being turned over to a whelping home.

Irlam explains the procedures of training for dogs between the ages of eight and ten weeks old. "The puppy raisers make a year long commitment. They get the pups between eight and ten weeks of age and then they have them until they are about 16 months old. They meet once a week with our puppy leader. We start training them like I said, they're trained, even in the wealthy homes, but every week we see them and they learn different things. They learn their basics on command, 'Sit down, come, stay' The biggest thing is exposing them to all different types of environments and situations. That's key to making them just be aware of their surrounding and to get their basic obedience within that first year, but it's the exposure.

It's going to the mall, going to an escalator, driving a car, going on a bus, going on an LRT, going to leash areas, walking in residential areas, going to a restaurant. We go to a fire hall. We try to expose them to every situation we can think of."

Patricia Timmermans, 62, became legally blind at age 45. Prior to going blind she was employed as a service representative and later a business process analyst. Several members

of her family were blind at birth, including her father and two of her sisters. Her condition is known as RP Retinitis-Pigmentosa. When she was diagnosed her peripheral vision was totally wiped out, leaving her with central vision. Central vision can easily be compared to looking through a drinking straw which is symbolic of the eye sight that Patricia depends on to see while finding her way around.

While going blind, she was forced to give up her driver's license and eventually resorted to using a white cane. She consulted with the C.N.I.B, while receiving their support and with the amount of vision left in her both eyes, that was adequate enough in helping her get around while using her cane. Her husband had made his commitment to helping her as her guide and assisting her to her appointments.

Once, while on a holiday in Edmonton's West Edmonton Mall, Timmermans and her husband noticed a nearby information booth hosted by DOGS with WINGS, an organization notable for providing guide dogs for the blind.

When she first applied for a guide dog and guide dog training, the first dog given to her by that organization wasn't very reliable in getting her around. That dog was taken back by the organization for re-evaluation and soon the dog was taken out of the program. Another more reliable dog was provided to Timmerman, accompanied by a guide dog mobility instructor, who drove down to Timmerman's town of Strathmore, Alberta, while providing guide dog training to Patricia.

In an interview with ASN she elaborated on what was taught to her while adapting to her area with the help of her new guide dog, Cooper, a two and a half year old black lab. Timmermans said, "The guide dog mobility instructor had me prepare routes that I'd like to travel or needed to travel throughout the day in advance. When the instructor arrived with the guide dog, she took me and the dog along the route explaining what we'd be doing and the commands that I'd use to get the dog to cross the street safely or get down a stairway safely and to navigate buildings. She basically followed us about five or six steps behind, while giving the instructions on how to walk with the dog."

Once adapting to the routines of getting to her appointed destination, Timmermans was finally on her own, guided by her dog, while going to her daily run to the post office. She explained the procedure of how she gets to the post office with her dog, Cooper. Timmermans said, "Say we approach the crosswalk to get to the post office. I tell my dog, 'Find the curb.' My dog would stop at the curb. Now a combination of me knowing that it's safe to cross by listening and also the dog, he's not going to step into moving traffic – it's a combination of those two. I would tell him OK go forwards and find the next curb. Then he'll cross the street and he'll identify the curb to



Patricia Timmermans with her guide dog, Cooper.  
Photo courtesy of Patricia Timmermans



me, because I would, nine times out of ten, probably trip on it as outside of my knowledge of the streets. Like, let's say it was an unknown obstacle. I would probably trip on it, but the dog would put his two front paws on the curb and wait until I was able to identify it with my my foot, and see how high the curb is and then he'll go forwards. When we get to the post office, I would identify it and I would say, "Here's the post office. Find the step." Then he'd find the step, the same as he just found the curb. He'll find the step and he'll wait for me to find the hand rail and when we get to the top of the steps, there's a combination of things that happen. I will realize that it's the top, because the handrail becomes parallel with me. He'll then stop, identifying with me that we're at the top of the steps. I'll say, "Find the door and he'll walk straight to the door, push his nose on the handle and then I can feel for the handle. I'll open the door and then we go in."

Prior to obtaining a guide dog, Timmermans encountered an array of obstacles. She said, "The biggest obstacle was transportation, because I was no longer able to drive, so finding public transportation, bus routes, C-trains, routes, that sort of thing. The commuter bus from Strathmore to Calgary that was the biggest one and physical obstacles, like I'd bump into a lot of things if I wasn't extremely careful on using my white cane."

Her dog is not only a reliable guide dog that always makes her day a convenient one, she also considers him a best friend, when they have time to both kick back on a dog's day off. Timmermans said, "We play a lot of hide and seek. He loves finding me. I'll hide with a toy or a treat. He loves that. He loves playing in the backyard, so we play. He just bounces in the backyard. He also loves going to the park and I don't. My husband will take him to the off leash park. So he gets to run and play with the other dogs. Nobody realizes he's a guide dog at the dog park, because he's just free."

It seems that life at age 62 is just beginning for Patricia Timmermans, who has future plans to one day work as an advocate for the blind, Timmermans said, "People fear blindness. I think people fear blindness worse than public speaking. Public speaking is a big fear. People are afraid of blindness and don't know how to approach it, don't know what to say. So I'd like to be out there and, you know, raise some awareness and to show everyone in public speaking that it isn't the end of the world!"



## Nothing more

By Angelique Branston

Im not on display,  
My life laid out for all to see.  
Where I live or who my family is  
Is not up for common knowledge.  
My hopes and dreams and struggles  
If I go to work with a cast or visible  
impairment of any kind  
It is not for extra money or sympathy....  
Just like any other type of worker  
You wear it because you have to,  
nothing more.  
I prefer it when it is politely ignored.  
I sell a product, not my life.  
I am not begging  
Or demanding.  
I smile because I like to, and to be polite  
Not because of what it might get me.  
I never claimed to be homeless  
Or make up things about myself for  
sympathy.  
I have a home  
With bills  
And rent  
Responsabilites that can not be shirked.  
I sell a paper, not my life.  
I am not for sale,  
I do not want to be someone's date for the  
night, to put it politely. . .  
I sell the paper, nothing more.

## The Price To Pay

By Rodney Graham

Thanksgiving 2018. It was wonderful - Everything you expect Thanksgiving to be... But when you are a full-time activist, and you tend to criticize those in authority - and those in authority who are corrupt, and who have the power to cause the kind of trouble that only those in power can, there is a price to pay. But I'm more than happy to pay it.

The evil gutter rats, who have been criminally harassing me for nearly four years showed their ugly face in the most private of places and at one of the most personal of times. Scared the daylight out of a dear, near relative. I made the mistake of using her pc to check social media. I used it only briefly.. Her pc was hacked. When she began using the pc she noticed the cursor roaming around.. the telltale sign of hacking... it was searching all of my searches, which were few, thankfully. This relative is easily scared and has issues - she is also elderly. She is a sweet and loving Christian woman who cares tenderly for her grandchildren and was a missionary in Africa. In her spare time she cares for refugee children.

## Just as I am

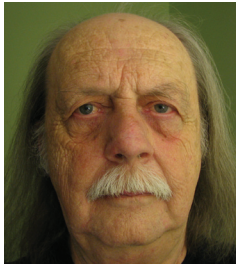
By Angelique Branston

The fat one  
Just a big blob  
That is what you call me.  
But do I not have eyes,  
Do I not have hands and a heart?  
that feels joy, and sorrow,  
and hopes and dreams.  
These things change not based on size.  
I do not think I am entitled to anything  
because of my weight . . .  
Please ignore it if you can.  
I can not help that you see me the way that  
you do.  
I have to accept how you see me  
Without allowing it damage my self esteem.  
Without giving in to pain and anger,  
without giving in to the darkness of this world.  
I have to give it to God.  
I can only guess that someone hurt you this  
way too.  
So I forgive you for how you treat me and call  
me down over my weight.  
My weight can change.  
My hair can change.  
My face could be melted off.  
But none of it changes who and what I am.  
When this vessel of flesh passes away  
I wil leave this world behind  
Finally free of these earthly shackles....  
I only wish that you could see who I am,  
And not just what I look like  
And accept me, just as I am.

I'd like these creeps to know a few things. I am very happy, for one thing.. their sneaky, cowardly, wicked games do not affect me any more. And the most important thing I want these cowards to know - as you 'investigate' me - you are being investigated. At this point in time in society where the police state is having so much 'fun' terrorizing activists and others who are merely doing what they can to make a change for the good, not only is there a lot of injustice perpetrated by those who are supposed to be protecting and 'serving' us. There is also a growing resistance to this horrific, ironic, evil - and there is an outcry in society - they are becoming aware of reality. Corruption among law enforcement agencies and security firms is being uncovered and dealt with at an increasing rate as well.

I reported being 'targeted' by friends and relatives in the security industry (Not MY friends and relatives, but friends and relatives of employees in the security industry and police communities who have targeted me, which started in Winnipeg) - nearly four years ago, now. As soon as it started. As you spy on me - target me - and tell others to do so... recruit other creeps to do so... you are setting a trap that you will be caught in yourself. You will be hung by the very rope you have spun.

# Requiem for a dead dog



By Allan Sheppard

If it was good enough for Grant MacEwan, it was good enough for me.

Mr. MacEwan was celebrated for many things, deservedly. The one that resonates most with me is his penchant for traveling by bus: on municipal transit buses in cities where he lived and on Greyhound coaches between cities. So loyal was he to Greyhound, that the company reportedly dedicated one of the buses on its Edmonton-Calgary route, which he traveled frequently, in his honour.

He is remembered today, at least by me, for his preference for traveling by humble, and slow, buses rather than grandiose limousines and high-flying aircraft.

Consciously following Mr. MacEwan's example, I became a frequent Greyhound user after I turned 65 and started getting Canada Pension Plan benefits and supplements: a modest income, but stable and more than enough for the simple lifestyle I had adopted during my years as a freelance writer and editor. In those days, the early 2000s, Greyhound offered a Discovery Pass program that, combined with benefits from my Airmiles account and a seniors discount, enabled low-cost, virtually unlimited travel for one- or two-month periods to anywhere in Canada served by Greyhound.

I had outstanding open-ended invitations from family members, relatives, and friends living in the Maritimes, Ontario, Vancouver, Victoria, and the far northwest corner of British Columbia, accessible only via Yukon. I also had a skill, acquired during one of my first paying jobs—as stage manager for a one-month bus-and-truck tour with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet—to sleep almost at will in a bus seat. While I did not have the means, enjoyed by many of my age-peers, to spend my old age collecting frequent-flyer points, I had the means and an inclination to become a frequent Greyhouser. During the past fifteen years, I have averaged two round trips a year to Toronto, connecting frequently to other points in Ontario, and another two trips per year to Whitehorse, Yukon on the way to my paradise retreat at Atlin, B.C. I have made a dozen trips to Vancouver and Victoria and many trips to Calgary and points on the way. At a rough guess, I have logged more than 100,000 km as a Greyhouser (plus another ten to twenty thousand on connecting carriers).

I might not have won a medal, if there were one, or had a bus dedicated to me for being the biggest user, in terms of frequency and distance, of Greyhound's travel services since I turned 65. But I believe I would be a strong contender for such an honour.

Cynics who consider bus travel beneath them might call it a dubious honour. I am not a cynic. I like bus travel.

Now that Greyhound no longer operates west of Sudbury, Ontario, having stopped running on October 31, I will miss being able to travel when I want to where I want at a reasonable cost and without many of the stressors I associate with air travel. Other operators will cherry-pick the routes that run over short distances between cities large enough to generate enough passengers to be profitable, but the long-distance runs, the runs from Edmonton to Toronto and Whitehorse that I traveled and enjoyed frequently will not be replaced. Not without subsidies from the federal or provincial governments, which will not be forthcoming.

Greyhound once enjoyed a soft monopoly on inter-city bus travel. It could serve a mix of large, small, and isolated communities by subsidizing losses on low-density routes on the prairies, in northern Ontario, and along the Alaska Highway, with some of the profits earned on busy inter-city routes. Deregulation opened the busier routes to competition, forcing Greyhound to reduce fares to compete, thereby reducing revenue and its ability to subsidize low-volume routes from its own profits. Predictably, Greyhound several times asked provinces to subsidize its service to small, isolated communities, without success.

Or so the story goes, at least as told by Greyhound supporters. There were other factors, certainly, some of them Greyhound's own doing. According to Greyhound's Wikipedia page, ridership declined dramatically in the past decade, especially in Western Canada. Ridership dropped 41 per cent after 2010, according to Greyhound, including an eight-per cent drop in Western Canada alone in 2017. Ridership on my favorite route, along the Alaska Highway to Whitehorse, dropped by almost 50 per cent between Dawson Creek and Fort Nelson from 2014 to 2017.

The Dawson Creek-to-Fort Nelson decline was due primarily to a dramatic fall in drilling and fracking activity in northeastern B.C.; not an unwelcome development to thoughtful minds, but fatal for an already marginal Dawson Creek-to-Whitehorse route. I never rode with more than ten fellow passengers beyond Fort Nelson, so it was obvious to me that the run could not be sustained without subsidy. Service from Dawson Creek to Whitehorse ended on 30 May 2018, five months earlier than in the rest of Western Canada. Coincidentally, I was a passenger on the last run.

The decline in ridership on other routes was less dramatic, but still obvious to me as a passenger. Knowing that Greyhound had already applied unsuccessfully for subsidies on its Prai-

rie and northern Ontario routes, I anticipated a reaction from Greyhound. Comfortable as it was to travel on half-empty buses, I knew the business was no longer sustainable. I would not have been surprised to see Greyhound cancel its low-volume routes. I was surprised that it cancelled everything west of Sudbury. That, it seemed to me, was an over-reaction.

Greyhound attributed its decision to increased car ownership, subsidies to competing passenger carriers, competition from low-cost airlines, and regulatory restrictions. I think there is more to the story.

Greyhound is owned by a multinational corporation based in Scotland. There was clearly no commitment to Canada or Western Canadians, if we could not generate revenues and profits that could be mined closer to home. When the going got tough, the tough-minded did not get going: they left.

The grisly murder of a young Greyhound passenger in 2008 seems more than coincidentally aligned with declines in ridership, which Greyhound says began in 2010. Security screening, introduced at some terminals might have been necessary for its optics, but it was a bit slipshod and seemed a pointless inconvenience.

The ending of the Discovery Pass five years ago could also have reduced ridership.

Canadian authorities could have stepped in but didn't. Subsidies and support to glamorous airlines and airports can be sold to voters, subsidies to a ragtag, unassuming bus service to small and isolated communities cannot.

Many Canadians can't contemplate traveling long distances by bus. They anticipate being bored. Worse still, many of them turn snobbish, though they wouldn't admit it; having to share a seat with some of our grubbier fellow citizens is a turn-off. There is an image factor best illustrated by an urban-dictionary word for a bus: loser cruiser. Only losers take the bus.

This loser doesn't have a problem with that. To me, there are no boring bus trips, only boring travellers. To take a long-distance trip by bus is to travel in a time capsule accompanied by my own thoughts, interesting or trite as they may be. I can read as much of whatever I want to carry with me and to listen for hours to my favorite music. When inclined, I can enjoy the passing scenery. Or sleep. What's not to like about that?

Foodies have their slow-food; I have my slow travel.

Yes, there are delays due to weather and mechanical issues. And yes, one occasionally must put up with unpleasant seatmates and noise from the back of the bus. Such things happen with air travel too.

So I choose to mark, with regret, the passing of a Western Canadian icon, only a few years older than I am.

RIP Greyhound.

You were a good dog. An unpretentious dog. I'll miss you.

# For richer or poorer

by Timothy Wild

A lot of attention was given to last month's increase in the provincial minimum wage from \$13.60 to \$15.00 an hour. Predictably many of the representatives of the business sector claimed it would serve as a brake on productivity, and would ultimately result in job losses. While those in the centre argued it was a long overdue – if still patently inadequate – extension of economic justice and participation. I, for one, am certainly happy that those working for minimum wage got the increase. It will be of some small help in terms of meeting the unrelenting financial demands of daily living. And, from a symbolic point-of-view, it also provides evidence that our legislatively moderate New Democrat government still has some vestiges of social justice left in its public policy agenda.

However, even pegging the minimum wage at \$15.00 per hour essentially means that we, as a society, knowingly consent to the fact that some workers can toil for significantly less than a poverty-level wage. The common retort to this legislated manifestation of exclusion is the idea that most minimum wage employees are teenagers working for pocket money. The absurdity of an age based wage aside, this is not actually the case, and I will return to the demographics of minimum wage earners soon. Others add that many people working at the lowest end of the income continuum are getting much needed work experience; offering, it seems, a bootstrap argument for people who have limited or no experience in Alberta's workforce. The logical extension of these arguments is that there are different categories of wage earners – the deserving and the undeserving, which is a chilling reminder of the spectre of the English Poor Laws.

Who, then, is actually working for minimum wage in Alberta? According to Public Interest Alberta (PIA), prior to October's increase, more than 300,000 Albertans earned less than \$15 per hour. This represents close to 16% of Alberta's workforce. And in terms of minimum wage workers specifically, women make up 60% of

the category, and over 77% of minimum wage employees are over the age of 20, with approximately 23% are over the age of 45. This hardly seems to reflect the generally accepted portrait of this segment of our province's workforce. As noted by PIA 183,800 (25.4%) of workers in Calgary and 117,300 (17.6%) of employees in Edmonton earn less than a "living wage", currently calculated at \$18.15 per hour.

I think that in addition to looking at the lot of low paid workers, however, it is also important to compare those risible wages with the wealth and income of those living in the rarified atmosphere at the other end of the economic spectrum. David Macdonald, a senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, provided a picture of that greener side in the report *Born to win: wealth concentration in Canada since 1999*. Macdonald noted that both income and wealth inequality have increased significantly in Canada over the last twenty years, and a large part of this is due to the current taxation system which favours the further accumulation of wealth by richer Canadians.

I was not particularly surprised when Macdonald wrote that "Canada's wealthiest 87 families now have 4,448 times more wealth than the average Canadian family, and they collectively own the same amount as the lowest-earning 12 million Canadians." However, I was taken aback by his assertion that the net average worth of Canadian families was \$669,300. Initially this struck me as high, but it does include one's house, which can tend to skew the overall average figure. I wonder, though, how the income and wealth of those earning, say, minimum wage or less than a "living wage" would compare to that average? Not that favourably I would suggest. And for those consigned even more to the margins by the amounts provided to people on provincial income replacement programmes, such as social assistance and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), the chasm between them and the Canadian average is massive. Money doesn't automatically mean social inclusion and participation, but it certainly helps.

Overall it seems that the unfettered functioning of the postindustrial capitalist economy does not benefit a significant number of the working class, but is particularly lucrative to families and individuals with already significant

wealth and incomes. To remedy this imbalance, Macdonald makes a number of suggestions for changes in taxation policy, including imposing taxes on inheritances, financial gifts and capital gains. As he noted these simple changes "could go a long way to curbing the tendency of Canada's tax system to heighten socially, politically and economically harmful levels of wealth concentration in Canada".

Money from these long overdue advances in taxation would provide funding that could be intentionally allocated to federal and provincial schemes of anti-poverty initiatives. After all, interventionist public policy, and not the wax fruits of Corporate Social Responsibility, is one of the necessary elements of transformative social change. Obviously, it is not quite so easy to balance this reality with the historical weight of political culture in Alberta compared to other parts of Canada. However, we do pay federal tax, and generally taxation policy at the federal level has some impact on the direction and framework of provincial taxation policy. But it seems that a lot of current fiscal and monetary initiatives are based on vague ideas of appealing to the fictional middle-class, so beloved by the Liberal Party of Canada, or maintaining the status quo by quieting dissent rather than systematically helping those on the margins, including folks whose wages are woefully inadequate to support authentic social, cultural and economic participation.

Yes, as mentioned, the increase in the minimum wage will be of some limited financial benefit. But the negative psychological, collective and economic impact on our society will be great until all workers are paid at least a "living wage". Sure, there might be consequences for some actors in certain sectors of the economy. However, as I have argued before, I am sure that there were some unhappy plantation owners in South Carolina in 1865. People must come before profit, and we need to do a lot more to promote overall human dignity not narrowly concentrated economic windfalls. This will require the creation of a left populist political bloc, centered in the knowledge and leadership of the multidimensional working class, and the aggregation and articulation of a comprehensive social, political and economic public policy agenda. It can be done. It should be done. But will it be done?

## People can be radicalized

By Joanne Bengier

Sunny Hundal, a keynote speaker at the International Network of Street Papers conference in Glasgow, Scotland, August 20 to 24, spoke on how easy it is to radicalize people. He has been a writer and commentator on identity, race and religion for more than ten years with some of Britain's top publications.

Hundal told how an incident can trigger hatred against a group or a race. He experienced this personally as a child in India, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh men. People were outraged and reacted

with violence against the Sikh community. His family, members of the Sikh community, had to flee. His younger brother's turban was removed, his hair brushed down and he was put in a girl's frock while Sunny went bareheaded.

In his talk he said that at this time we are all being radicalized and don't know how to stop it so we feel angry and scared. It is easy to radicalize people. You don't have to radicalize everyone - if you radicalize one group they will in turn react to others and spread the hate and fear. It all starts with triggering a small group of people to say something outrageous. The media pays into it and helps spread the polarization

creating unrest as they convince us something isn't right. People react and over react. As they feel attacked they try to defend their views by attacking others. People soon feel pushed into a corner as they try to defend what they feel is right and find no one is listening. We must calm society down by finding common ground. We must look for similarities not differences. We are all in this together and must fight polarization.

Sunny suggests communicating and sharing our feelings to clear the air. We must learn to see the other point of view calmly and with understanding.



# INVALIDATION OF OUR CHILDHOOD

By Maria B.

Parenting is one of the greatest responsibilities a person can take on. After raising children from birth to adulthood, a parent can look forward to having a life long relationship with their adult children. Unfortunately, circumstances sometimes arise where an adult child chooses to ignore their parents. These situations can often cause hurt feelings and emotions, but parents must be honest with themselves and think if their relationship with their children was based on fear or on love. Were they the kind of parents that caused emotional and physical pain to their children, or were the kind of parents that ignored the emotional needs of their children or maybe they were the kind of parents that were indifferent and inadequate, or exploitative and cruel. The fact is that if the parents were toxic, they were able to cause incredible damage to their children, the kind of damage that manifests itself in adulthood and the kind of damage that the children do not want to be put through any longer.

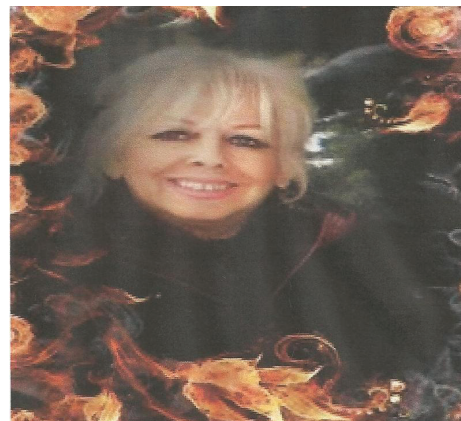
The fact is that there are millions of adults that have suffered tremendously and as a result have become emotional cripples because of the invalidation they suffered as children. As adults they are living the hurtful legacy of their toxic parents and these parents are oblivious to the damage that they have caused to their children. Often they can not take responsibility for their poor parenting and instead of taking the opportunity to ask forgiveness from their children, they continue to invalidate them in every way.

I know myself if I had gone to my father and

asked him why he treated me the way he did, I would have been denied my "truth" of what he did. He would have ignored the wounds that he inflicted on me and in the end I would have been invalidated and blamed for his toxicity. I can site so many examples of how he used to fabricate things or take the opportunity to target me so he could physically punish me, making me feel responsible for his toxic behaviour. I will cite one time when he went drinking and left his dog in the truck. Unfortunately he left the window open so the dog took the opportunity to escape. When he arrived he was angry and desolated and while he was talking to my step mother, I asked what happened. He looked at me and he stated "It is your fault that I lost my dog" and he started to hit me. I still can feel the weight of his hands on my head and on my body. His error became "my fault".

My father was not different; he was like many other fathers that exist in the world leaving victims at the end of their journeys as "parents". For me the end of his and my mom's journey was when I was six, when they just abandoned us and probably it was the best thing that could have happened in my life as my paternal grandmother raised us. Through her we were able to learn trust, love and personal responsibility. There were five of us and she was in her sixties. She was an excellent role model and through her I learned to stand up for my truth, what I see as my truth, what I feel as my truth and what I speak as my truth.

Six year of toxic parenting was enough to cause damage, which developed into a very negative personal image and negative self esteem. I grew up suffering from the hurtful legacy of my toxic parents and carrying the burden of guilt and shame as I used to believe that there must have been something wrong with me. I heard the words enough and I was able to feel their disdain. This has been one of the most hardest thing to deal with. Because through that invalidation, I ceased to be the kind of person I was supposed to be, I learned to live the abusive words that were uttered. I lost my identification as a human being. I detested myself so much I wanted to disappear. I was turned into a shadow of hurt and pain and ridden with fear. Now when I see a parent figure, the horrible words they tell their children and the horrible way that they make them feel by their indifference, I re-live the pain and I am able to identify



with the children's helplessness.

How many young adults, in order to avoid the wrath of their father or it could be their mother, choose to live in their bedroom, away from the toxic parent. These parents are time bombs, anything triggers them and is better to stay away from them. There is no one that cares why that the child lives in isolation and refuses to integrate with the family. The child is well aware that if he speaks out, chaos will arise and in the end it would become the child's fault for speaking up. These children blame themselves for the abuse; they are defenceless; if they say something to their mother, the mother will get angry with the father and the father will only deny what he has done, leaving the child in an uncomfortable place feeling that he can not trust what he is feeling and knowing that the person that demands his respect lies and can not be trusted.

In the mean time, they feel invalidated, isolated and worthless, nurturing feelings of hurt, anger and confusion. It becomes a very dark vortex in their life.

It is not only the occasional physical abuse but the constant emotional and verbal abuse that tends to be a pattern of behaviour coming from the toxic parent that becomes a consistent and dominant reminder that the child is worthless and good for nothing. These parents are guided by control not by love, constantly attacking the core of the child and crippling him or her.

At the core of every adult child of toxic parents - no matter how strong or successful he or she may appear - is a blameless child whose trust has been betrayed by the people that were responsible to protect them and to ensure that their rights were not violated. Good parenting foster empathy, honesty, self-reliance, self-control and kindness. Failing to do this, we have to accept the responsibility of the adults that we are moulding ridden with anxiety, depression, antisocial behaviour, abusing alcohol and drugs. I am tired of hearing, "Our parents did the best they could" No, they did what was easier and what took little effort. Children deserve more from us; we need to become better and more effective parents.



Left:Linda Dumont with her painting of The Mustard Seed at the Art From the Unknown show on October 27. Dumont paints with the Mustard Seed Art Club.Photo by John Zapantis