

ALBERTA Street News

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Angelique Bransoton was a finalist for the INSP Award for best vendor contribution in 2018.

More on page 2 and page 7.

Photo by Linda Dumont



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ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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**THE VIEWS
PRESENTED ARE THOSE
OF THE CONTRIBUTORS.**

Alberta Street News Story a finalist for INSP Award

By Linda Dumont

This year story by Alberta Street News vendor Angelique Branston was short listed as one of five finalists in the International Network of Street Papers Award in the category of best vendor contribution.

Branston's story, *The Secret Hours* ran in our December 2018 issue and has been reprinted in this issue on page 7. The judges said, 'Alberta Street News vendor Angelique Branston shares an intimate account of her childhood at the hands of an abusive father and finding solace in an unlikely source while away from him. Judges felt the piece was full of raw emotion and kept them guessing until the end.'

Branston has been a writer for *Alberta Street News* for more than ten years. She regularly sells papers at the Strathcona Farmers' Market on Saturdays. She struggles with multiple challenges including poor health.

This year there were 365 contributions from 54 street papers in 28 countries in 12 different categories. The award for Best Vendor contribution was given to the Australian paper, *Big Issue Australia* for a story titled *The Happiness Project* in which disposable cameras were given to vendors so they could take pictures of what makes them feel happy.

The 2019 INSP conference was held in Hanover, Germany from June 18 to 20st. This was the 25 anniversary for the INSP.

Unlike the majority of INSP street newspapers, including *Big Issue Australia*, *Alberta Street News* is a grassroots paper with no paid staff, is written by volunteer writers and is published by volunteers. This was the first time we entered any stories into the competition. Writer Joanne Bengere went through all of the 2018 issues to select submissions and discovered that there was no category for many of our stories that are editorial or humorous in nature rather than feature stories and news stories.

As the editor of *Alberta Street News*, I commend all of our writers for their selfless work in continuing to support the paper through contributing stories and photographs.

Homeless Memorial

By Linda Dumont

The 14th Annual Homeless Memorial was held June 26. starting with a service at the Boyle Street Community Services followed by a walk to the Homeless Memorial where people went to lay flowers. The memorial commemorated the deaths of those who died due to homelessness in 2018.

Right: A tile image by artist Linda Dumont of Chris Robillard and Diane Wood on the Homeless Memorial. The image is just one of the memorial's portraits of those who died homeless.



Five facts for Canada Day

By Joanne Benger

1. Canada became a nation in 1867 but remained politically tied to Britain until 1931 when the British Parliament declared the Dominion of Canada an independent country.
2. Canada used the British Union Jack or Red Ensign as a flag until Feb. 15, 1965 when George Stanley designed our very own red, white and leaf Canadian flag.
3. Canada got its name from the Iroquoian word Kanata which means village or group of huts.
4. Canada is the second largest country in the world. Only Russia has more land.
5. Most Canadians live within 206 miles of the Canada-U.S. border, which is more than 4000 miles long.

You're probably a Canadian if....

By Joanne Benger

1. Driving your car, you have hit a deer more than once.
2. You use snow tires all year round.
3. You have a panic attack when you can't see snow.
4. You clean your car with a snow blower.
5. You give directions in hours not miles.
6. You have worn a parka and shorts together.
7. You used both the AC and the furnace on the same day.
8. You treat Canadian Tire money like legal tender.
9. You begin sentences with 'I'm sorry' and end them with 'eh'.

Welcome the dog days of July

By Joanne Benger

It's July, our busiest month. Visit a Tourist Information Center and celebrate July.

1. July 1 is Canada Day. Let's hope it doesn't rain on the parade for "if 'July the first be rainy weather, it will rain for four more weeks."
2. July 2 is New Moon. For good luck say, "White Rabbit" when you wake up before you say anything else.
3. July 3 Dog Days begin and they last until August 15. This is the hottest, sweatiest time of the year.
4. July 4 is U.S. Independence Day and let's hope it doesn't rain on their parade for they can expect 40 days of rain to come.
5. July 4 is Midsummer Eve on the old calendar which was replaced in 1752. Build a bonfire, toss wild flowers into it and dance around it tonight.
6. July 9 is Sugar Cookie Day. Bake them, share them and eat them.
7. July 12 is Orangeman's Day in Ireland. Wear orange if you wore green on St. Patrick's Day.
8. July 14 is Bastille Day. In 1789 in Paris on this date people stormed the Bastille and let the prisoners loose.
9. July 5 is St. Swithin's Day and let's hope it doesn't rain for "if thou dost rain, for 40 days it will remain."
10. July 17 is National Tattoo Day. Bare your creative skin art.
11. July 18 the word Hello is 142 years old. Thomas Edison invented it July 18, 1877 when Canada was ten years old.
12. July 25 is National hot Fudge sundae Day. Enjoy the treat that is cold as winter, hot as hell and sweet as heaven.
13. July 27 is Korean War Veterans' Day. Be kind to a veteran today.
14. July 31 is Tornado Day, Edmonton's saddest day of the year. Up until 1987 we thought this area was immune to such disasters. Have a minute of silence to honour disaster victims.
15. July 31 is also our second New Moon for this month. For good luck say, "White Rabbit" when you wake up.



Dog Days end in August

By Joanne Benger

1. August 1 is Corn Harvest Day. Enjoy Taber's famous corn on the cob.
2. August 2 is Lammas, the harvest festival.
3. August 3-4 is the Pigeon Lake Music Festival.
4. August 5 is Gordie Howe Day. Put on a hockey jersey and watch hockey reruns.
5. August 5 is Heritage Day, a new holiday but Alberta's own since 1974 when the first Monday in August was declared an annual holiday to recognize and celebrate the various cultures of Alberta. 1976 saw Edmonton's first Heritage Festival, three days of dance, food and cultures from around the world. Enjoy.
6. August 11 is the second Monday in August, one of the four unluckiest days of the year. Don't start anything new.
7. August 12 is Middle Child Day. We're not the first. We're not the last. We are just us. Middle children are the most agreeable and adaptable of all. Celebrate with a middle child today.
8. August 15 Dog Days end. We can expect our first frost of the year on the next cloudless night so be prepared to cover the flowers.
9. August 15 is full moon. Beware the werewolf and lock your doors. The moon will be waning for the next two weeks so you can clear away weeds and tidy the garden.
10. August 17 is the Down and Dirty 5 km Obstacle Course at Edmonton's Tunbridge Ski Area. It's fun for mud lovers and spectators alike. At home enjoy Mudpie Day by making chocolate desserts covered with gummy worms.
11. August 24 is St. Bart's Day. If Bartlemy Day be fair and clear, hope for a prosperous autumn.

**Want to get involved? Write a story,
take a photo or become a vendor.
Call Alberta Street News at 780-428-0805
WE NEED YOU**

OPINION

The Rat People.

By Rodney Graham, Winnipeg

We had a big problem in Winnipeg, Manitoba for years. Harassment and stalking - TERRORIZING - By-law officers continually harassed our paper vendors. We sold a 'street paper' on the street. The vendors got all the profit from it and paid a low fee, the cost to print. It was/is a great benefit. It helps people living on inadequate fixed incomes to make ends meet...

One vendor, who was mentally challenged, was followed and harassed by a by-law officer every day - for months. Debbie Roberts was the vendor's name. She was our first vendor in the city. She passed away of a heart attack a few years ago, and I always wonder if the harassment had something to do with the PTSD like symptoms she developed over the years...

She was a sweet person - Everyone loved her - harmless, had the mind of a five year old child.

We got licenses for the vendors, but by that time the security guards and by-law officers had scared most of them off the streets for good. Winnipeg is probably the most intolerant of the needy and homeless of any city. Other cities have adopted by-laws criminalizing the poor that Winnipeg implemented, including the by-law to criminalize squeegee kids - the first anti-squeegee by-law in the country.

I went to several politicians and activists in the community. Nick Ternette helped me contact people. The city dropped the requirement eventually - but, as I said, it was then too late. They achieved their goal. The city, as all cities are, is run by the chamber of commerce - they get their way - by hook, or by crook...

And there is no lack of two dimensional, sadistic, slimy characters out there - who work for security, police, and bureaucracy, to persecute the needy, the poor, the less fortunate. And there are as many in the public, too. If you see someone terrorizing homeless people or vendors, give them a damned good tongue lashing!



5th annual Breaking the Silence Walk and Run Held June 8

Story and photo by John Zapantis

Little did Raj Virk ever imagine that the shocking unexpected tragic suicide of a close childhood friend would one day inspire his special calling to create his popular fundraising run and walk called Breaking the Silence Mental Health Awareness 5 kilometre Walk and Run that helps to raise public awareness about mental health issues.

That was the important message carried out by more than 1300 runners and walkers, who were all onsite while preparing to get ready to either walk or run on a 5 kilometre route around Millwoods Park in Edmonton. The important fundraising event took place on Saturday June 8th at 10 a.m. at the Millwoods Recreation Centre.

Alberta Street News was in attendance for the annual fundraiser that started its opening ceremony with a stage presentation featuring two prominent keynote speakers, who spoke about mental health issues and the stigma that surrounds people living with mental issues.

Prior to the commencement of the morning presentations, Breaking the Silence Mental Health Awareness Founder Raj Virk took time

out for an interview with ASN to elaborate on a childhood friend Surjan Sanghera's tragic suicide and the struggles he was facing and the mystery behind the origins of his tragic passing. This was instrumental in why this event is such an important cause in helping to raise public awareness about mental health issues. Virk said, "He was protective of his loved ones. So I mean if something was to go sideways, he was always the first person to be there. He was very athletic. A lot of people looked up to his athletic achievements that he had. He loved to play soccer. So those were some of his positive strengths that he had."

Despite being loved and well admired by family, friends and fellow students, right after graduation from highschool, Raj's friend Surjan Sanghera started to experience serious mental health issues, Virk said, "After he graduated, at times, now that I look back, that he'd get emotional. He would go missing at times. We had no idea where he was and what he was doing. He at times got emotional. He would have a lot of mood swings. There were times, like I said, we wouldn't get in contact with him, because we wouldn't know where he was. There would be burns on him. There would be scars on him."

For a while, Raj's friend was no where to be seen, up until he got an unexpected phone call from his friend's parents announcing the sad news of his suicidal passing, Virk said, "Now when I look at it, we had no idea that suicide had taken his life. I mean his family, we applauded them. They tried as much as they could to give him support. Unfortunately he had threatened his family not to tell his friends. He would himself threaten the family to not let us know, not to tell his friends that he was going to commit suicide.

Some time prior to his suicide, Surjan was diagnosed for Bipolar Disorder.

Despite his friend's tragic end road, Raj realizes that his calling is to drive the message home, about mental illness, to prevent others from falling through the cracks. Virk said, "I clearly don't want anyone else to go through it. So that's why after the event - I meant his funeral itself. Lets do something. You love kids, You love to run. You love to walk. Why don't we get all of these three together, not just the East Indian Community, and Break the Silence behind mental health and bring the awareness and as you can see today there's vendors here today from different mental health societies. If you need help, need support they're here for you."

The event's stage presentations consisted of two keynote speakers of prominence, who both spoke about the detriments of mental health and supports provided to people in need.

Keynote speakers, who were introduced to the stage to speak by MC and Breaking the Silence Founder Raj Virk, included Ward 12 City Councillor Mohinder Banga and The Honourable Amarjeet Sohi Minister of Natural Resources.

Mohinder Banga delivered his heartfelt speech on mental illness and the stigma that people face when struggling with the complex issues of mental illness, Banga said, "It is my pleasure to be here on behalf of City Council, to help break the silence around mental health in our city. It's been encouraging to see this event grow, year after year, both in terms of registration and community impact.

Every year this walk and run raises much needed awareness and funds to support the well being of young people in our cities. All of us whether directly, or indirectly, we are all effected by mental health issues, regardless of your background, gender, ethnicity, age, financial status, every single person here knows someone who has struggled with depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems.

What is most startling perhaps, is that many of these issues are preventing the progress of young people and the willingness among the young generation. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), 17% of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescent years.

According to the Mental Health Association (MHA), more than 3.2 million Canadians between the ages of 12 to 19 are at risk of developing depression. Numbers like this are heart breaking to hear, but the good news is, there is hope when depression is recognized. Accessing health can make a huge difference in the vast majority of people. All it takes is one little step in breaking the silence around mental health.



Breaking the Silence volunteers were at full force helping this event come together for people facing mental issues. Left to right are Sawan Dhaliwal, Tony Brar, Diljot Sadhra and Jag Banga

Continued on page 7

Orthodoxy, politics and the “common good”

By Timothy Wild

Martin Royackers was a Canadian Jesuit priest murdered at his home in rural Jamaica in June 2001. Fr Royackers was shot dead at close range and although the crime remains unsolved, and the actual motives behind the cold-blooded execution remain unclear, it has been suggested that Royackers' advocacy on behalf of landless Jamaicans placed him in direct opposition to the dominant interests of large land owners. His notions of land reform, peace, broader participation and inclusion flew in the face of traditional constructs of power, one's "lot in life" and the social relations of hierarchy. It is quite likely that Royackers paid the ultimate price for his beautiful solidarity with people on the margins.

A fellow Jesuit writing about Royackers after his death noted that the priest held a combination of traditional theological views married with radical social, political and economic standpoints. The writer suggested that Royackers' faith was a blend of the theology of Opus Dei and the politics of Arthur Scargill, the former leader of the National Union of Miners in the United Kingdom. This blend is not actually that peculiar. In fact, it is an orthodox position held by many Catholics, particularly those of us who find the daily practice of our faith informed by the general principles of Catholic Social Teaching, including concrete and constant support for the preferential option for the poor, solidarity and the common good.

Despite this orthodoxy, however, the voices of those informed by Catholic Social Teaching (together with other expressions of progressive, yet orthodox, manifestations of faith) seem to be lost in larger political and economic dialogue. The fact that someone can hold a constant life ethic, and a left-wing view towards economic redistribution and social participation, is not often heard in broader discourse. In fact, such views are actively discouraged and frowned upon by liberal elites. And rather than attempting to rebut the arguments with debate, they are silenced in a totalitarian manner and kept off the so-called table of liberal democratic pluralism. This puts a significant brake on attempts to further justice, equity and inclusion.

Despite the fact that a progressive Catholic voice was responsible for much of the social, political and economic gains in society, the current political spectrum does not seem to provide a home for these political views. Indeed, Justin Trudeau has made support for abortion the litmus test for one's acceptance as a candidate for the Liberal Party of Canada. Realistically, the Supreme Court of Canada would never support limits to access to abor-

tion. If a challenge was made, abortion would quite probably be constitutionally recognized as a right of Canadian women. But that isn't really the point I am making; the point is that political ideas should be left open to debate and refinement. To keep ideas off the table, and demand active compliance to a certain standpoint seems to me, well, totalitarian. However, I don't think there is much faith left in Justin Trudeau's democratic chops. He has a long and distinguished history of self-serving pragmatism, so I shouldn't really be surprised.

But this isn't only a problem of the boringly narrow-minded Liberal Party. The Conservatives do not – despite some lip service at election time, particularly around “social issues” – subscribe to political and economic viewpoints that would implement a preferential option for the poor guaranteed by inclusive public policy. As with the Liberals, they still subscribe to notions of trickle-down economics, damaging constructs of “deserving” and “undeserving” individuals and groups, self-reliance, resiliency as desirable, short-term economics and an expanding role of charity. The New Democrats left the pursuit of social democracy behind long ago, and their reliance of identity politics – as opposed to being the vehicle for a working-class project – has made them vocal opponents to the constant life ethic stemming from Catholic Social Teaching. Finally, will the real Greens stand up? It is terribly unclear what they stand for and, as my friend Bill MacKay and I wrote in an article almost a decade ago, there are fifty shades of green. Indeed, during the recent election in Prince Edward Island, the leader of the party admitted that they were economically conservative and socially liberal...just like every other mainstream political party.

Where, then, is the voice for the working class? Whether or not one likes to admit it, class remains an important dimension in one's life chances. Yet the mainstream political

parties do not advocate for public policies that will promote the economic well-being of the working class. And this isn't just a theoretical and / or ideological argument; this is based on the recognition that far too many Canadians do not have adequate access to what should be basic rights of citizenship.

Anyway, back to the main theme of this piece. I was at my son's convocation from a Catholic university a few weeks ago, and one of the recipients of an award from the university was a well known philanthropist who has donated a considerable sum of money to post-secondary education and healthcare in Alberta, and has made a sizeable contribution (both in time and money) to the growth and development of Catholic post-secondary education in our province. He has made a significant impact, and the award was certainly deserved; he is a wealthy man, and he choose to give some of that wealth back for the greater good. However, in his acceptance speech, the individual noted that Alberta was lucky to have a Catholic as Premier and added that Catholics were well represented in Mr. Kenney's first cabinet. This sentiment troubled me as I am not sure that a public profession of faith necessarily results in an orthodox congruence with the Social Teachings of the Church. For example, the Catholic Church is clear on the need of the economy to meet the needs of the common good. The Church is also clear on the rights of the workers, and for there to be collective stewardship – both now and for future generations – of our province's finite natural resources. I am not sure that Mr. Kenney's government is in line with the social teachings of the Church. Once again, this isn't surprising. Profit frequently trumps justice. But this doesn't have to be the case, and an application of Catholic Social Teaching can provide some idea – whether one actually believes or not in the theology – about ways to create a more just, humane and inclusive society.



American White Pelicans by John Zapantis

Genocide?

What genocide?

How dare they?

By Allan Sheppard

“We have been the aggressors from the beginning, and like all other aggressors, we shall never forgive them the injuries we have done them.”

Those words were spoken in the British parliament 250 years ago by Isaac Barre, an MP sympathetic to grievances of the British Empire's thirteen North American colonies. They were meant as a warning to Britain's leaders that the colonists would rebel if the Empire did not change its oppressive ways with the colonies.

Barre was ignored. But he was right: the colonies rebelled less than a decade later to become the United States of America.

There are many ironies within the Barre quote. Start with the fact that the colonists for whom Barre advocated so eloquently were, at the same time, unashamedly aggressive and oppressive in relations with Indigenous peoples who occupied land they coveted and, after Independence, valiantly, if futilely, resisted the thrust of Manifest Destiny.

Add the fair assumption that Barre, however insightful his analysis of Britain's treatment of its colonials was, would likely have approved of the colonists' aggressions toward their Indigenous neighbours and their predictable refusal to forgive those neighbours for the colonists' inconvenience in having to contend with their resistance, militarily and in other more demeaning ways after the warring was done.

In spite of, or rather because of, the ironies, I find it useful, from time to time, to recall Barre's words when Canadians wax self-righteous about their and their country's treatment of and relations with Canada's Indigenous peoples. The word and the concept of genocide did not exist during the independent US government's Indian Wars, but there is widespread expert agreement that the term genocide can be applied retroactively to describe what took place.

Canadians have wanted to think that, because we did not go to war with Indigenous occupants of the land we now claim and control, we were and are somehow more enlightened in our attitudes and relations. Aside from a handful of firefights, our behaviour could not, so the conventional wisdom goes, be called making war. We sent (glamorously tunicked and mounted) police to quell small-scale uprisings in the West.

They were soldiers, but it seemed more benign to call them police and to think of them as agents of peace, order, and good government, rather than enforcers of what was arguably a colonial project; an exercise in building a nation, not an empire. And if a few eggs had to be broken in the making of that omelette, it would

be done to as few as possible and as gently as possible; politely.

Those soldiers/policemen and their handlers might not have resorted routinely to the military methods adopted by our southern neighbour, but they did not hesitate to copy, some might argue to exceed, the more demeaning ways adopted in the US: reserves strategically designed to exclude Indigenous peoples from good land and necessary resources, treaties routinely broken, residential schools, among a long list detailed in many reports produced by many commissions over many years.

Not many Canadian have gone so far as to label Canada's treatment of the Indigenous people of the land we now control as genocide. That changed with the June 3 release of its final report by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, chaired by Indigenous judge Marion Buller and including two other Indigenous women among four commission members.

The report calls for 231 “imperative” changes to the way our country and its people deal with Indigenous peoples, some of them predictable, others surprising, even radical.

Most surprising and radical of all, to many if not most Canadians, was the commissioners' decision to refer to Canada's treatment of its Indigenous nations and peoples as genocide and to make it clear that they meant the term to apply to current, as well as historical, policies and practice.

Small minds parse the meaning of words; open minds parse the actions of governments and people and allow victims to speak their truths.

The result was a firestorm of protest from politicians, media, and other influencers and would-be influencers, some of them claiming to be otherwise sympathetic to the demands of Indigenous nations and peoples and the concerns addressed by the Buller Inquiry. Canada and Canadians might have acted reprehensibly, even (perish the thought) from time to time unjustly, though never with aggressive self-righteousness of our American neighbours. Elimination of Indigenous nations and peoples was never overt policy and practice in Canada, as it was in the US under President Andrew Jackson, among others. And however grievously Canada may have behaved in the past, it clearly does not behave with the same assimilationist policies and practices it once admittedly followed.

Whatever Canada and Canadians have done and are doing, the argument goes, it was not and is not genocide.

But...

I would not have used the g-word for Canada's treatment of its Indigenous populations over the years and now. Nothing was done here on the scale or with the scope that was done by

the US to its people. Nothing was done here that was even close to what happened during the Jewish Holocaust before and during the Second World War. Nothing done here compares with the atrocities committed by the Japanese against Chinese and Koreans during the Second World War or inflicted by the Belgians on the Congolese at the beginning of the last century. Many atrocities greater than those inflicted by Canada and Canadians on Indigenous brothers and sisters have been committed, and are still being committed, in many parts of the world.

What happened to Indigenous Canadians may seem small and mild in a bigger picture. But does that make it any less painful to those on the receiving end of admittedly bad treatment? I have not experienced any of the negative things that have been done to Indigenous Canadians by our government and people. For that reason, I do not believe I have a right to define the nature of their experience to them and for them.

The politicians, media, and influencers who object to the use of the term genocide have also not experienced things described by our Indigenous brothers and sisters so many times and in so many ways. Yet they presume to judge and define what happened and, even more egregiously, to dictate how the victims should define, for themselves and us, what happened to them and how.

To return to the Isaac Barre quote, too many Canadians have rushed to forgive themselves and their predecessors for what was and is still being done to their Indigenous neighbours: to continue blaming the victims. We will not forgive them for what we have done to them. Yet we shamelessly forgive ourselves. And, even more shamelessly, we expect them to forgive us. And so we quibble over a word—a loaded word, to be sure—rather than tackling the realities that prompted people who have shared experiences we have not to use the word.

For shame.

US Democratic political firebrand Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, as she often does, has the perfect response to such disingenuousness. Attacked by Republicans for referring to detention camps for migrants trying to cross the US border as refugees, she tweeted, “I will never apologize for calling these camps what they are. If that makes you uncomfortable, fight the camps—not the nomenclature.”

Don't believe there was or is genocide in Canada? The best way to demonstrate your good faith, if you have any, is to fight the attitudes, policies, and actions that motivated the commissioners' decision to use the word, not the word itself or the decision to use it.

We have all benefitted from policies and actions that were taken against our Indigenous brothers and sisters—all, that is, except those who bore and still bear the brunt of those actions and policies.

Small minds parse the meaning of words; open minds parse the actions of governments and people and allow victims to speak their truths.

Breaking the Silence

Continued from page 4

When youth are given the support, they need to talk about mental health and courage to access health services, when they need it. They're better equipped to manage stress with difficult situations throughout their issues.

The work that CASA does, from family therapy to day programs to rehabilitation services, empowers young people in our city, to become stronger and more resilient. The funds you raise here today, will directly support CASA's efforts in our city. So I'd like to thank each and everyone of you supporting this critical work. By being here today, you're helping to break the silence and the stigma faced by so many of our friends and family and neighbors."

Right after Banga completed his speech he presented a proclamation on behalf of Mayor Don Iveson and City Council to organizers of Breaking the Silence for their important contributions to Edmonton's mental health community, officially declaring the day Breaking the Silence Day for June 8th, 2019 in the City of Edmonton.

When the stage presentations were completed at 12 noon, 1300 runners and walkers headed off from the starter's line, either running or walking on a 5 kilometre journey around Millwoods Park.

The silence, once again in this year's annual event, was broken as 1300 runners and walkers proudly returned to the finish line, raising \$20,000 in fund raising pledges. The proceeds will go to support the operations of CASA's many mental health programs and services while supporting people with mental health issues.

Thanks to the many selfless runners, walkers and donors along with those committed volunteers, local sponsors and the organizers of Breaking the Silence, Raj Virk and Jag Atwal, people experiencing mental issues won't have to feel embarrassed by remaining silent but will have the proper care and support, where their voices can be finally heard!

Tim Hortons Camp Day June 5th

Story and photo by John Zapantis

Camp Day, held June 5th, is hosted annually by Tim Hortons, who notably donates 100% of their coffee sales to one of seven kids camps in North America.

Every year Tim Hortons invites underprivileged children to a free camp where they learn leadership and survival skills and participate in an array of camping and outdoor activities.

The leadership and survival skills that will one day encourage these young people in becoming law abiding citizens while working their way towards becoming successful and productive future members of our society.

Last year's event raised \$13.1 million dollars that was all donated to the Tim Hortons Foundation that makes Camp Day possible for those happy young campers.

Thanks to the late Ron Joyce, co-founder of Tim Hortons, who established this foundation in 1974, activities in a scenic wilderness paradise are possible for the thousands of children in North America who get to experience this annual outdoor activity in helping to build bridges in our communities.

Right: Promoting the Camp Day at a Tim Hortons located at 16039-97 street in Edmonton are left to right in photo Tim Hortons owner/operator David McEachern and Former Edmonton Decore MLA Janice Sarich



The Secret Hours

By Angelique Branston

One late august afternoon about a week before school started my sister and I shared an experience with which we now look back on and laugh.

My sister had been visiting for awhile. Often times that summer we found we were alone with our dad. He took turns locking me and my sister in the basement for imagined wrongs we had done, as a way of punishment. He was very strict with what we were allowed to eat. Even after days of having nothing we went right back to the strict diet. Deviation from his rules meant certain brutal punishment.

We found little ways to make our stomachs hurt less like picking certain vegetation that grows in Alberta (our mom studied plants and taught us what to eat if we ever got lost in the woods), as well as licking the mineral blocks with the goats after feeding and watering all the goats and chickens on the farm. Well one afternoon just before school started our dad drove us into Fort Saskatchewan to go swimming and he gave me money for school supplies - pens and pencils paper and binders. We were told to swim for at least three hours and he would pick us up by the mall. He watched us walk into the swimming pool and drove off.

After an hour of swimming my little sister crawled out of the pool and sagged down, resting her head on the floor. When I asked her if she was alright she said yes. She was just hungry. We both looked out through the glass to see the big M sign shining less than a half a block away. When I looked back at my sister I could see she too was weighing the cost and the likelihood of being caught.

We talked quickly about how there was no one we knew near by so no one could tell him what we did. One of his ways of control was to lie and tell you that your friend saw what you were doing and was

concerned over your actions so of course they told him... your dad.... just to trick you into confessing. As long as we made it back to where we were supposed to meet up he would never know the difference.

So with red eyes from the chlorine, my little sister and I walked to the McDonalds. She couldn't stop talking about how good the burgers would taste even as we stepped up to the counter. I pulled out my money. It was a fifty dollar bill. We both ordered a few hamburgers and a pop and sat down. We hunched over our food and ate fast. For our second trip to the counter the teenagers were smirking and giggling. I am sure with our red eyes and binge eating we must have looked stoned.

After drinking about four large pops were told we had to buy another. We nodded our heads and I handed over the money. They had to send someone to clean our table for us at one point. The table was covered with little crunched up wrappers. After our first hour at McDonalds, our bodies finally stopped shaking. The teenagers no longer smirked at us but simply looked with eyes full of curiosity and concern. We left full for the first time in what felt like forever. Giggling and skipping we made our way back to the appointed spot to meet.

We agreed that as to not give ourselves away. We would eat our supper when we got home, which was not hard to do. We were fed thin vegetable soup and told to go to our rooms. We met up in my sister's room and lay on the bed together. We had made it. We were not caught. Life would continue as normal with our home life. But that day we learned that our dad did not always have someone watching us. There were limits to his control. For those few hours we were free.

I spent the rest of the year borrowing paper and pens from kids in my class. Having moved around so much by this time I had no friends in school. It was easier not to try. I never once regretted my decision to spend the money on what has now become part of our collection of memories that I think of as our secret hours.

Dehumanization of children changes who they are supposed to be

By Maria B.

For defenseless children, what goes on behind closed doors stays behind close doors with no one to help them. One abuse that has not received the recognition that it deserves is verbal abuse, which is domestic bullying.

Growing up in a home where uttering insults to innocent children is a way of parenting is truly dehumanizing. The imprints made will stay with them for the rest of their lives changing who they are meant to be. Verbal abuse is the kind of indoctrination that attacks the very core of a child, denigrating them and stripping them of their basic rights as human beings.

For some caregivers, children become their source of income; they also become an outlet for frustration, a scapegoat for all that is wrong with his/her parents. Parents with the inability to care for others fail to develop the skills necessary to be a parent. They are clearly lacking the understanding of what is necessary for the healthy development of a child so ridiculous expectations are forced onto children and when these innocent children fail to meet them, they become targets for denigration and shameful labels. Children are the constant subject for verbal abuse in order to make them submissive "lambs".

Picture the strength of the blow from an adult against an innocent child; picture the impact of every demeaning name coming from the caregivers which are equally as damaging. Every blow, every word is a true representation of the cowardice and malice that it takes to be able to promulgate those acts.



In abusive households there are two kind of verbal abuse:

1. Being called insulting names, yelling, constant criticism, put downs, etc. uttered to humiliate, to invalidate and to denigrate. The damage imparted with words attacks the very core of a defenseless child and this is done with impunity.
2. Glossed as teasing/joking: Where humiliating, denigrating names and put downs are made as jokes which also serves to humiliate and degrade the target. Obviously children seldom react as they will be accused of being too sensitive or not being able to take a joke. For a child growing up, this kind of environment is crazy making and for caregivers to use such an insidious form of entertainment lacks any kind sensibility and is utterly abusive.

The fact is that parents with lack of parenting skills tend to develop distorted views about their children and because they lack the understanding that children are human beings they resort to call them every denigrating word to label and to define them as bad and/or troublesome. The atrocious and abusive behavior of the parent serves as a mirror where innocent children grow up viewing themselves as flawed, worthless and inadequate, with a very poor image of themselves and carry with them feelings of shame, guilt and blame. These children live in constant anxiety and fear and the same fears that had kept from asserting themselves as children usually takes control in adulthood and develop into depression.

I got the message early in life that my being in this world was more of a curse than a blessing to my parents. I have been told I used to be fearful and suffer from nightmares; now I understand my fears. When children are overwhelmed with fears it is not because they are flawed, it is because of the way they have been treated by their caregivers. My father's angry outbursts used to make me tremble and my fears were overwhelming. Those fears have been my loyal companions throughout my life.

While my father's perception of me was toxic, in my abused state I used to perceive my father as "omnipotent and with incredible and fearful strength". In my healthy state I can tell that my father was a very troubled man that gained strength through the infliction of pain, physical and emotional, on innocent and very helpless children as we did not have anyone that was able to protect us.

I grew up hating everything that reflected me in the mirror. My adversary was myself and how I hated what I saw. I was in constant defense and defiance mode and through all of this did not realize that the war had become against myself. I became completely oblivious to the truth of who I was as I completely trusted what my father saw in me. I was completely hollow



inside and flawed on the outside. The impact of the verbal and physical abuse incubated me into a broken and very vulnerable being. All my decisions were being made through a false and wounded self therefore some of those decisions were not being made on my best interest and while it did not hinder every aspect of my life, it did restrict my capacity to give and to love as in my childhood I did not receive love.

It took a counselor that spend with me one hour to take away the bandage and set me free. He told me: "You are looking at yourself through the eyes of your father, you have to find out who you truly are." He also asked me if there was something that I could honestly admire about myself and I told him yes I know I am not the perfect Mom but I know how much my children mean to me. They are the reason for my presence in the world. And he told me I had to find myself and release all those wonderful gifts that I have that define me as a mother.

When I came out of his office I literally felt that I had left behind so much baggage and I felt empowered to find out who I was. Since then it has been a wonderful journey. I went back to school and I started lifting all those negative veils that kept me enchained in a state of depression. Now I can see myself clearly as an incredible human being with the inherited right to be on this earth, I truly believe that I was created in the divine image of our creator and he does not create mistakes. I am not a mistake, I am a gift to the world. I know that every day will bring a lesson and I am eager to learn, I know for a fact that I am not the only child that was targeted for abuse. And that even if I have forgiven my parents, I am still able to recognize the damage that their insecurities, their shame, their vice, etc inflicted on the life of an innocent child.

I truly believe that when we expose the truth of our history of abuse and validate the pain that we have gone through we are able to recognize the incredible strength within.

Parenting is a "privilege" not a right to own children and treat them as property. Children are divine gifts that should be cherished and protected in every way. They are our future and we are doing so little to protect them. We are the custodians of the helpless and we must speak out and become the voice of these children "The abuse of innocent children must stop now".