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ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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Happy New Year

By Joanne Bengier

1. January 1 is New Year's Day. Happy New Year. Kiss your old year out and kiss the new year in. Sweep the old year out and sweep the new year in. Watch the rose bowl parade on TV and eat black-eyed peas. Every pea eaten today brings another dollar in the new year.
2. January 2 is Party's End. Some people stay drunk from Christmas Eve to January 2. Some of us just over eat. Sobriety and diet time have come.
3. January 2 to 4 are the first three stock market days of January and set the mark for the year. As January goes so goes the year. And January down, year down. Lets hope the price of Alberta crude goes up.
4. January 4 is Toss the Fruitcake Day. I try to find the reduced bins and stock up. I love fruit cake.
5. January 5, Tuesday between January 2 and 8, is the day Epiphany is observed in many churches.
6. January 5 is the Twelfth Night. The eve of the Twelfth night or Epiphany, Shakespeare wrote Twelfth night for acting at a twelfth night party. It was a time of merry making when the world was topsy turvy and a Bean King was chosen. Add a friendly warning - if you are broke on Twelfth Night you will be broke all year.
7. January 6 is Ukrainian Christmas Eve when twelve meatless and dairy free dishes are eaten. It is Epiphany celebrating the day the wise men reached Bethlehem to see baby Jesus. In times past this marked the first day of the Epiphany season which lasted until lent.
8. January 7 is the happiest of days and the saddest of days. Happiest is you celebrate Ukrainian Christmas. Saddest if it's Divorce Day for your family. Many parents stay together so their children will have a merry Christmas to remember, then get divorced on the first Monday in January.
9. January 11 is Milk Day for the glass milk bottle came into use January 11, 1878. Drink milk today.
10. January 12 is Pharmacist Day. Take all your outdated prescriptions to the drug store for disposal and buy new ones if the shortage is over.
11. January 14 is Organize Your House Day unless you are Ukrainian in which case it is New Year's Day. Happy New Year. Kiss the old year out and kiss the new year in. Sweep the old year out and sweep the new year in.
12. January 17 is Ditch the New Year's Resolution Day. As the Irish say, May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions.
13. January 19 is Epiphany if you are Ukrainian. The wise men finally reached Bethlehem.
14. January 20 to 26 is National Non-Smoking week. Butt out.
15. January 23 is John Hancock Day, which is National Handwriting Day in his honour. Practice your signature so it will look impressive when someone says, 'Put your John Hancock here.'
16. January 27 is Family Literacy Day. Read a book with your children.
17. January 29, the last Tuesday of the month, is the Scottish Up-Helly-Ah, which means Finished Holiday. In olden times they celebrated it by burning a Viking ship.

Life

By Angelique Branston

There is a time for everything
For every life a time of joy and pain, life and death.

But it is different for each how much of each season one receives.

Scattered to the earth we fall

Like seeds upon the earth.

Some are lucky and born into a world of love and nurturing.

Some, are born into strife and war, where only glimpses of peace and love touch tortured souls.

None of us chose where or how we were born.

All we can do is choose how what we go through affects us,

Do we choose to be the reed that bends in the wind quietly bearing the heavy winds?

Or do we turn like rabid beasts and tear at

everything we touch?

There is a place and a reason for each of us to be here

Does anyone have the right to say how another must live? Or think?

Are we all to fall in place like a colony of ants?

Do we destroy the weak members of our pack like chickens that peck the sickly ones to death?

Do we walk the path of least resistance and live like a suckling fish on a shark?

Or do we choose to walk on the unstable footing,

To be the nail that is hammered down

Or allowed to blow gently in the wind

Either to honor, or dishonor

To be you, regardless of the consequences

This is all that we can choose,

The rest falls where it may on our lives as snow drifts down upon the earth.

February has arrived

By Joanne Bengert

February is all things to all people. Among other things it is Adopt-a-Rabbit month, apple Month, Black History Month, Friendship Month, Heart month, National Embroidery Month, and Psychology Month.

1. Since 1947 the first week of February has been White Cane Week and more recently it has also become Eating Disorder Awareness Week. Be kind to those who are visually impaired or who have weight issues.
2. Begin February frugally. It is unlucky to get a loan during the first three days of this month. Neither a borrower nor a lender be.
3. February 2 is Groundhog Day. It is the only day of the year when we don't want sunshine which means six more weeks of winter.
4. February 4 is World Cancer day when we celebrate progress made in cancer research and care and hope for a cure.
5. February 5 is Chinese New Years celebrated

in China, Korea and Vietnam. Eat pork and oranges today - pork for good health and oranges for money. We are entering the Year of the Pig. You are a pig if you were born in 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007 or 2019. Pigs have great inner strength and make few but lasting friendships.

6. February 9 is National Pizza Day. Order in or eat out.
7. February 13 is Oil and Gas Celebration Day because oil was discovered at Leduc on this date in 1947, which was also the Chinese Year of the Pig. Let's hope oil gets back on track and we have something to celebrate.
8. February 14 is Valentines Day. The young dream of future loves, the old remember past loves and the ones in between enjoy. I hope you get a Valentine today.
9. February 15 is International Childhood Cancer Day. For the past 30 years Children's Wish has helped sick children experience the wonder of a dream come true.
10. February 15 is also Flag Day. The maple leaf replaced the Union Jack and Red Ensign on February 15. 1965 and made its world debut when Nancy Green won Olympic Gold for skiing.

11. February 18, 1930 Pluto was discovered and briefly become planet number nine. Then it was found to be a tiny ball of ice and downsized to dwarf planet. Since 2006 the phrase 'to Pluto' means to devote or devalue something or someone.

12. February 18 is Family Day. Celebrate it in a way that will bring your family closer together.
13. February 22 is World Thinking Day, an annual Girl Guides event. Girl Guides share, are honest and make a difference in the world. Enjoy Girl Guide cookies today.
14. February 24 is Tortilla Chip Day. Crunch and enjoy.
15. February 25 is Pink Shirt Day. It is not enough to simply avoid being bullied. We must step in and come to the rescue when we see others being bullied. Wear a pink shirt today.



How Mary kept her Resolutions

By Joanne Bengert

1. I resolve to start a new diet in 2019... I found this fabulous Weight Gainers Hi Carb diet and I find it delicious and satisfying.
2. I resolve to declutter my basement in 2019.... My basement is empty. I moved everything into my garden shed.
3. To control clutter I resolve to follow the one in-one out rule in 2019. I just bought a new coat, two purses, jeans and a sweater and I tossed out five pairs of old socks. That's five in five out.
4. I resolve to save more in 2019...I've made a good start. I've just started saving bread clips, plastic bags and old newspapers.
5. I resolve to exercise in 2019.... I decided a health club was too expensive. That's exercising good judgement.
6. I resolve to stop drinking in 2019.... I've stopped drinking water, green tea, milk and diet pop and I admit I have a few more drinks to give up.
7. I resolve to play less Bingo in 2019. I no longer play any Bingo. I find lottery tickets are faster and the prizes are bigger plus I can scratch them anywhere any time.
8. I resolve to see my dentist in 2019... I walked past his office and looked in the window and saw my dentist there.
9. I resolve to give to the poor in 2019....I'm the poorest person I know so I just gave myself \$50.
10. I resolve to watch less TV in 2019...I no longer watch any TV. I let my laptop entertain me.
11. I resolve to turn down the thermostat to save energy in 2019....I turned it down to 18 and manage well thanks to space heaters.
12. I resolve to phone my mother every week in 2019.... Sorry Mother, I broke this resolution but no one in perfect. I did keep the other eleven.

Novena

Saint Mother Theresa - Say nine Hail Mary's for nine days. Ask for three wishes, first for business, second and third for the impossible. Publish this article on the 9th day. Your wishes will come true even though you may not believe it. Amazing but true!

Happy Valentine's day. Think!

By Joanne Bengert

1. The chocolates are melted because he placed them too close to the car heater.
2. The roses are wilted because they got frost bite as he stood on the door step.
3. The fancy restaurant was over booked so Valentines Day was fast food.
4. The dog got into the chocolates and had to be rushed to the vet.
5. The phone battery went dead so we couldn't exchange Valentine greetings.
6. One of the guests forgot to tell us he was allergic to roses.
7. The snail mail Valentine came back stamped 'Return to Sender'.
8. The e-Valentines were accidentally deleted.
9. It is still Valentines Day if you got no Valentines?
10. We planned a romantic outdoor outing but the weather didn't cooperate.
11. We just heard our role models, that romantic Hollywood couple, are divorcing.
12. The messages on the candy hearts were very rude. Who bought them?
13. Why do I always get irresistible chocolates when I am on a diet?
14. Oops. Gotta work tonight. Everyone called in sick.
15. Why do Valentines Day and flu season always come together?
16. No, a red mixing bowl isn't a romantic Valentines gift.
17. Diamonds aren't a girl's best friend when they are on her credit card.
18. Who put the sin in cinnamon hearts?
19. The romantic singer got laryngitis and can't sing love songs.
20. Why is there romance but no rowomance.

Eradicating the stereotype of coyotes being a threat to people

By John Zapantis

There's the common stereotype about the coyote that I'll do my best to eradicate while defending the rights of these innocent wild dogs. I can only speak from personal experience while encountering them to prove the theory wrong that these dogs are a danger to society.

This article may give our ASN readers a better understanding of where these wild dogs stand with those misconceptions of how they are a direct threat when encountering them. I've had many interesting encounters with these dogs and as far back as I can recall, my first official sighting of one in our city was in Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River Valley's, Snow Valley, known as a natural forest.

It was a hot summer in 1996, while I was going for hike. Walking by a cut-line I noticed a coyote seated up right, staring straight at me. The amazing sight of this beautiful dog made me curiously come to an abrupt stop. The coyote continued to remain still and calm while confidently staring straight at me.

I was now losing patience and feeling in a hurry to continue with my afternoon walk, more than satisfied with this sighting of this wonderful wild dog. I clapped my hands together, loud enough to see if I could get him to move from his comfortable position and succeeded in doing so. He immediately got up on all four legs from his seated position and made a counter clockwise turn as he ran off in a two o'clock direction, running up the cut-line on the valley's hill.

The clapping noise proved successful as my defence mechanism in getting him to leave the area and was proof enough that these dogs are timid and not necessarily a threat to man. So if you ever encounter one seated down a few feet away from you, all you have to do is clap your hands together as hard as you can and that loud clapping sound will inevitably serve as their wake up call, getting them to leave at your command!

Despite putting the coyote's nerve to the test, I've realized that they're opposite of how they're misrepresented by ('Coyote Haters')! Some people that I've spoken to while sharing my insight and personal experience with these amazing dogs, will attach the stigma to these dogs, by peddling their views in claiming that coyotes will attack, because of the

slight resemblance to the wolf. When these theories surface in the discussion with me, I'll often pop the question to them, "Have you ever encountered a coyote on a one on one?" Their reply is an obvious, "No."

Then I'll ask them, "How can you be certain about your claim?" Usually, most people won't challenge me to the debate.

After they've heard about my incredible testimony of how non-threatening a coyote can be, even compared to (sometimes) overly aggressive domestic dogs, like a Rottweiler, or a German Shepherd, who by the way are dogs that sometimes display the opposite behavioral traits.

Dogs in specific, who get away from their masters, when they're not on a leash, after escaping out of their own backyards, will often run into pedestrians barking at them while coming up to those people and aggressively demanding their attention. Some people, who are dog illiterate, would feel threatened and scared, frozen still in their tracks. Those who don't understand the nature of the domestic dog, wouldn't realize that the dog barking, is just greeting you to get your attention and is really not there to harm you, when you're thinking the worst.

Here's another way of backing up my claim about my safe encounter with coyotes. Just recently, three weeks ago, while driving away from my parent's place in Northmount, after visiting them, I happened to be driving east-bound down 143 Avenue towards 95 street. I looked towards the left shoulder of the sidewalk along the avenue. There I noticed to my left a coyote walking briskly towards my car along the sidewalk. Then to my right across from the coyote, I noticed a young woman in her mid-twenties, scraping ice off the windshield of her car situated in front of her house. Thank God, the lady hadn't noticed the coyote.

I looked out at the coyote and then noticed the dog looking over his left shoulder at the lady for a moment, but despite knowing she was there, the dog carried on his way with his nose to the ground, searching for rabbits instead.

The stigma of it all! Had that woman noticed the coyote, I'm sure she would have dropped that scraper in a hurry and run inside her car for safety. You'd think by now coyotes are often judged as a threat to attack and that the coyote would have put the chase to this woman, but it did the complete opposite, without showing a care in the world, when he first saw her. He was more interested in sniffing the ground and searching out rabbits, instead of making this woman his (so called) afternoon meal! So that's what naive people think, when they know nothing about coyotes.

People are not on the menu, I'm happy to say, for the only food source that coyotes depend on for survival includes, insects, small

mammals including rodents, rabbits and left over garbage. The coyote is truly a survivor, an independent hunter and distinct from a domestic dog, where a domestic dog is always going to have his meal arranged for him when the old dog does new tricks!

There's a popular public misconception by a coyote illiterate public that coyotes are a wild elusive dogs, always conducting an open season on people. What can eliminate that stigma of how coyotes should be feared and not trusted is a video I once saw while watching a young male in about his mid thirties, who can be seen taunting a young coyote on a country rural gravel road, while mockingly shouting out and laughing at the coyote, whose being charged at by the man, who runs at the dog while making an effort to kick the poor animal.

When the man throws a front kick at the coyote, the animal can be seen quickly backing away to avoid being hit by the man's swift kicking, only to come to an abrupt stop, then forcing the coyote to fight back and lunged at the foot of its abuser in opening its mouth to bite him on his foot.

The coyote then quickly backs away again on the man, who can be heard loudly laughing, while chasing the coyote again as the animal runs away for safety.

This scenario goes on repeatedly at least three more times until the video cuts out. Just goes to show you that when a coyote's being physically provoked by man's ignorance, the coyote obviously has the right to protect itself.

We as people shouldn't always point fingers at coyotes, for there's another animal out there that's a lot more dangerous than a coyote and that animal sometimes is known as man!

Coyotes are also clever and I can attest to that by one unusual encounter I had with that dog one night in the summer of 2010 while walking Northbound along 97 street towards 157 avenue in Edmonton.

While on that walk I noticed a large looking dog crossing in front of me, making his way Eastbound. I realized that the dog, wasn't a domestic dog after all, after taking a real good look at him.

The shape of this big dog, distinctively stood out as a coyote that used some sort of defence mechanism to pass off as maybe a German Shepherd, but obviously blew his cover, cause he never came up to me, or even barked out loud, like a typical domestic dog would.

The coyote, as typically shy that they're known to be, kept going his way, while trying to avoid me. What a clever strategy for a coyote that doesn't want to be bothered!

So remember readers, if you ever encounter a first time close encounter with one of these clever dogs, there are two pointers that could come in handy.

Dickens, Orwell, Poverty and the NDP

By Timothy Wild

A few months ago, Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) issued a press release highlighting the risibly low levels of income provided to “those receiving Alberta Works and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)”. The release, together with the accompanying document, Poverty in Calgary, noted that those consigned to a marginal existence due to the inadequate support provided through these two programs “are at higher risk of living in poverty than that of the rest of the population”. Given the low financial support, coupled with the cost of living in Calgary, as well as the difficulty in actually getting on to the programs, this higher risk of poverty is hardly surprising. The structural perpetuation of poverty by stealth has been going on for a long time in Alberta. Indeed, it has allowed the so-called elites to exert social, political and economic control over the working classes. A sad state of affairs to be sure.

More recently, however, the moderately centrist New Democratic provincial government, announced they would be increasing AISH and Alberta Weeks income amounts in January 2019. The changes, initiated by Bill 26 “An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities”, would see an increase in AISH (the first since 2012) from the current \$1588 to \$1685 a month; while social assistance, for those expected to work, went from \$627 a month to \$745. Provision was also made for an annual increase based on inflation, and families were helped in terms of retention of child allowances and provision for self-funded, augmented supports.

Certainly, an increase is of some value. It is a small step in the right direction and can, perhaps, be seen as evidence that the NDP government has not completely given up on its social justice agenda. But even with the changes, the amounts are patently inadequate to meet the current costs of living in urban centres in our province. Even though both pieces of legislation are supposed to provide a basic level of income adequate enough to support authentic social and economic participation in terms of health, housing, education, clothing and food, in practice this is clearly not the case.

In large part, the shortfall is due to the ideological limits of social policy when it comes to poverty elimination or even reduction. It is clear that the ghost of the English Poor Law continues to haunt public policy development and implementation in our province regarding poverty. The Poor Laws provided extremely limited financial help and in-kind assistance to people who were alienated from sustained and economically viable participation in the work-income nexus. And the levels of support reflected that alienation, particularly as capitalist relations of production took over from feudal. The English Poor Laws, and their patchwork application in the colonies (including what is now Alberta), offered a meagre measure of support for people on the edges of society, and certainly had a gendered lens. Frequently, recipients of parish support for the “poor” were women

(widowed or abandoned) and their children. Additionally, people with mental, intellectual and physical impairments, together with folks too “old” to work, were also recipients of the inadequate and uneven support from the local parish.

Subsequent reforms of the Poor Laws, particularly those of the Whigs in 1834, transferred responsibility for relief from the local parishes, and centralized control under a system of Poor Law Guardians. These changes also included codification of “deserving” and “undeserving poor”, the provision of indoor relief tied to labour in work houses, and the incentivizing notion of “least eligibility”, which argued that the highest level of poor law support should be less than the amount provided to the lowest paid worker. The cumulative result was misery. Charles Dickens wrote remarkably clearly on the deplorable social conditions caused by these factors, as did George Orwell a century later. Photos, contemporary articles and lists chronicling the names and demographics of the “inmates” also graphically illustrate that these were not places that supported or promoted the dignity and inherent value of each and every human being. One’s value was determined largely by one’s current commodity value to the market.

Sound familiar? It should, because these selfsame principles still haunt the development of social policy in Alberta today. Here we are, back to the bad old days of the Poor Laws. People with disabilities are seen at some level as being more “deserving” than, say, single people who are deemed fit for work. This allows for some flexibility in providing different supports based on that notion of “deserving”. However, even when that is put into place, both groups continue to receive income that is proof positive of the principle of “least eligibility”. A report issued in the fall by ATB Financial showed that the average weekly income from employment was \$1150, roughly \$4983 a month. Compare this to the recently increased amounts provided through AISH and Social Assistance. How can anyone actually live, thrive and participate on these amounts? One can barely exist let alone find one’s way out of the trap and swim towards the brilliant light of full social rights of citizenship.

As argued by a number of groups, including VCC, we need a comprehensive social policy response to fight poverty in Alberta. There needs to be more coordinated and transformative action beyond simply tinkering around the edges to make Social Assistance and AISH slightly less inadequate. Linking to inflation doesn’t really help much when it is already so woefully low. Providing more opportunities to earn money, to squirrel away funds for later in life, particularly for people who generally can’t work, also seems counter-intuitive. And an increase in asset limit is of limited value when people generally eat through their assets prior to going cap in hand to the government for assistance. We need a fundamental transformation of social relations in our province.

Both AISH and social assistance rates are clear examples that just because (well meaning?) policy exists, it does not mean it is adequate or effective. In fact, it can sometimes serve as a brake on much needed change. Basically, we need to create a society where people are valued because of their humanity rather than their perceived economic worth.

Remember not to panic and remain calm, if you see a coyote seated down a number of feet in front of you. If in doubt of the coyote, you can clap your hands together, like I did when I scared that coyote away. If it happens to be walking in front of you, don’t panic, or walk in his way, chances are they will continue to walk their way, happy to avoid capture.

Coyotes are here to stay and the population explosion has forced them into many of our major North American cities, where they now reside, a safe haven for them away from the hindsight of hunters.

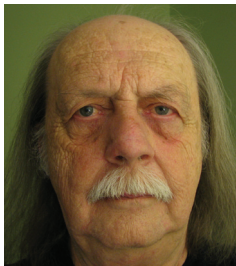
They’re here on a mission to notably balance the ecology, while keeping a check on the rodent and rabbit populations.

So the next time you encounter a coyote, just sit back, relax and stay calm. You can watch how this survivor hunts and survives and don’t forget, never fear what you can’t see at the other end of that tunnel, cause chances are it might be a coyote!

Right: Coyote pups, a painting by Linda Dumont



Life is Complicated



By Allan Sheppard

Life is complicated. But you already knew that. Last month I wrote about an encounter on a downtown Edmonton street between my five-year-old grandson and a middle-aged woman who accosted him as we disembarked at a bus stop yelling, "You should be dead!" The woman seemed mentally or emotionally disturbed, which could have explained her behaviour, though hardly excused it. I speculated that such acts of violent verbal abuse randomly or intentionally inflicted on children might lead them into mental health challenges of their own as they grow older. I also speculated whether the woman who abused my grandson so cruelly, thoughtlessly, was herself the product of similar abuse as a child. I incline toward a yes answer to both questions, but I left them unanswered, inviting further consideration.

I did not tell the full story of my grandson's day in the real world of life as it can sometimes be.

After spending a couple of hours at the downtown library, my grandson, his older brother, and I took a bus toward home. We sat on the bench seats at the very back of the crowded bus. A man in his thirties, somewhat scruffy in appearance, was seated near us on one of the side-facing seats over a rear wheel well. He placed himself in such a way and projected such an attitude as to make it clear he would not welcome anyone sitting beside him. I felt cautious more than frightened, for my grandsons more than for myself.

As we approached the Southgate terminal, where we would transfer to a local route for the last leg of our return journey, the man whom I had thought intimidating did a surprising thing:

He took a five-dollar bill from his pocket and offered it to my grandson. Naturally shy and perhaps still feeling some aftereffects of his earlier encounter, my grandson did not respond. After an awkward pause, I took the money and gave it to my grandson. I muttered something about the gesture being appropriate because my grandson had turned five the day before and he would welcome the money as a birthday gift. I did not, as I recall the exchange now, thank the man for his gesture. I was too surprised, shocked even, to respond as I now think I should have. I was, among other things, too busy trying to analyze the man's motives (Was he the kind of man who lured children with money?) to do what I now believe would have been appropriate, to thank him on my grandson's behalf for what might fairly be called a random act of kindness and generosity.

In the meantime, another question has come to mind: Can an act of kindness or generosity, random or intentional, make up for, offset, cancel out an act, any act, of violence or cruelty?

Put more universally, can gifts or grants of money cancel any debts that might be incurred through acts of violence or cruelty?

Or, to put the question more bluntly in the economic fundamentalist rhetoric of the day, can we commodify, that is create markets, in wellbeing and recovery, pain and suffering, such that dollar values can be calibrated and certain dollar values of one will offset more or less equivalent dollar values of the other? I think not.

There are, I believe, dollar values and psychic values, and they are not commensurable. Money and the things it can buy and do cannot buy or foster happiness or compensate for unhappiness. They cannot make up for opportunities lost and burdens carried in consequence of things done and not done to us. They can at times and for some of us, help mask or suppress the effects of insults and injustices, sometimes to the point of addiction; they cannot make them or their consequences go away.

Does that mean we should not, whether directly or through our governments and when appropriate, responsible organizations and corporations, give financial compensation for acts of violence and injustice committed on our behalf or to our eventual benefit by those institutions and their predecessors?

Financial compensation for wrongful conviction and imprisonment, cultural genocide

and other abuses of Indigenous children in residential schools and of children and adults in institutional care, forced appropriation and destruction of lands and ways of living for commercial and industrial gain, among many kinds of insult and injustice is the least we can and should do to right past and ongoing wrongs. It is the least we can and should do. But it is not the only thing. Or the most important and necessary thing.

Justice, the righting of wrongs, the healing of wounds, the restoration of integrity and dignity, reconciliation, means hard work. It cannot be replaced with money that, though it may be hard-earned, can only be seen as easy in such circumstances, circumstances that demand an investment of more than money; an investment of personal and community integrity equal to or greater than that which was taken and the suffering that was endured by the victims of injustice.

Psychic injustices amount to psychic debts that must ultimately be accounted for and paid as diligently as financial debts. We are not good at the calculus necessary to account for psychic debts because we habitually and, I suggest, defensively avoid recognizing, understanding, and dealing with them.

Yet not recognizing and dealing with psychic debts does not make them go away. They persist, often consciously, always subconsciously, until healed. Or until they burst through the constraints we use to insulate ourselves from them, too often with destructive results. I sometimes think these days that the angry populisms that surround us, mostly on the right but on the left too, are manifestations of such outbursts. Perhaps I overreach.

I know that most psychic damage inflicted on children comes not from strangers but from members of their families and from other people close to them. So, once again, I must acknowledge that there are no easy problems in relationships among ourselves and with our children, and there are no easy answers.

Life is complicated. That may explain why we so often find it difficult to know, do, and say the right thing. It does not excuse us when we fail. Or prevent us from learning from our failures and doing better next time. Not the happiest thoughts to enter a new year. But perhaps worth exploring in the months ahead.

THE MIRACLE OF CHRISTMAS

By Maria B.

Celebrating Christmas is not about the

purchases that we make but is a reminder of the birth of Jesus and the incredible legacy of unconditional love, kindness and gratitude that he was able to model through his short presence. We live in a world where in order to be accepted, the demand is that we sacrifice who we are. But in order to preserve our essence and be "who we are in the eyes of our creator" we must never sacrifice who we are and must always do what is right for us.

We are the ambassadors of our creator and our love, kindness and willingness to help others must become the thread of gold that forms the tapestry that makes us an intricate part of a humane and caring society.

Respecting ourselves we realize the importance of treating everyone with the same respect and dignity that we righteously deserve. We must develop gratitude in our heart, the kind of gratitude that is manifested in every word, in every action and every

One child is too many

By Timohy Wild

Two of my favourite songs are “In the ghetto” performed by Elvis Presley and “They don’t know” by the Jamaican artist and political activist Max Romeo. For those unfamiliar with the songs, “In the ghetto” tells the tale of a mother and child in Chicago, struggling each day with a racially constructed poverty, and describes the growth of the boy into an angry young man gunned down during the execution of a crime. Similarly, the song “They don’t know” is about a family living in poverty in Jamaica, who are doing all they can to make ends meet and help some of the younger children go to primary school. You really should listen to them.

I appreciate both songs because they paint an evocative picture of injustice in society, and reflect how the upper classes don’t necessarily know, or want to know, what is happening to people on the social, cultural and economic margins. For the rich, perhaps, ignorance is bliss? Both songs display the consequences of ongoing and intersecting gender, class and racial oppression. Regardless of the root causes, though, the songs are about children surviving in poverty, and chronicle the unnecessary limits placed on their opportunities from Day One.

These songs, however, are not related to the particular social dynamics of some “other” space. They also reflect current conditions in Alberta. The same political and economic choices of the dominant interests that perpetuated poverty in Chicago and Jamaica are still at play in our province. The consequences of these choices can be clearly seen in a report released recently by Public Interest Alberta, The Edmonton Social Planning Council, and the Alberta College of Social Workers. The document, “One in six is too many” notes that between “2006 and 2016, the number of children living in poverty has grown 23.4%.” In terms of absolute numbers, using recent data from Statistics Canada, the report suggests that “as of 2016 in Alberta, there are 171,860 children ages 0-17 living in poverty, up from 162,200 in 2014. This equates to 17.7%, more than 1 in 6, Albertan children living in poverty.” This should be unacceptable, but as a society we continue to make

choices that allow this to continue to happen. And while the “bourgeois cool” may wring their hands, with dinner party concern, about this social tragedy, they are often unwilling to make the significant economic changes – such as increased taxation – to deal squarely with the problem. As liberals, they are also viscerally hostile to the fact that a democratic socialist solution is the only option if we truly want to deal with child poverty specifically and overall poverty in general.

Now, in my experience, there are very few independently “poor” children. These children usually live in families which are poor. Parents, for example, who have disabilities, are members of sexual minority groups or are Indigenous are particularly over-represented in poverty figures. Then there are those working for hourly wages that provide for less than a living wage, let alone a wage suitable for raising a family with dignity. Much of the poverty is linked to a person’s economic value. Either they are employed for a low, inadequate wage, or they are members of the army of reserve labour, which help keep wages low and profits high. And overall, this is a clear example of the feminization of poverty. Lone female parents raising a family experience significantly higher rates of poverty than a number of other groups. As noted in “One in six is too many”, “additional barriers faced by female-led families include unequal pay, working fewer working hours due to familial responsibilities, discrimination based on gender, race, and / or sexual orientation or identification”. To top it off, Alberta has the largest gap between rich and poor in Canada.

I know I sound bitter. I am bitter. But I am also saddened and bored by the periodic attention paid to child poverty, without any meaningful accompanying significant political action. About 30 years ago, in the Fall of 1989, the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion calling for the elimination of child poverty by the year 2000. Obviously, despite fleeting parliamentary outrage and conscience, child poverty is still a problem. This is because profit continues to trump people. Money wins over social justice. And while corporations can have their public image campaigns based on the fickleness of Corporate Social Responsibility,

they actively fight against structural measures that would help reduce poverty, such as increased Corporate Tax rates; an area we have considerable space to move in and still maintain a deep competitive advantage over other political jurisdictions. Individuals also express their concerns with measures that would significantly reduce poverty, such as increases to capital gains and estate taxes.

I think my main frustration is that we could do something about it and develop a comprehensive and transformative social policy response to child poverty, and poverty in general. Planks in this policy platform – involving both the provincial and federal orders of government – should include housing and childcare subsidies, the provision of adequate housing and child care, living wages, implementation of the letter and spirit of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, free public transit, dental and pharma care, pre-kindergarten programs to promote and “equal start and an open road”, mental health supports and equal access to quality primary and secondary education regardless of ability to pay. We also need to pay significant and focused attention towards the feminization of poverty, as this would go a long way to solving poverty in general. But it seems that there is no sustainable political will to implement this comprehensive approach due to the smug hegemonic power of the dominant classes.

One in six is definitely too many. Indeed, I think one is too many, particularly when we could readily solve the problem. But the political will is not there. Children born in the 1989, when the Commons motion was passed will be turning thirty this year. Some of those will have grown up in poverty, and others still will be raising their children in poverty. This is completely unacceptable. As mentioned, I think that one child in poverty is too much. And for those who disagree, or make moral and / or economic judgments for perpetuating child poverty, I hope you can sleep at night, because children are going to bed hungry in unsafe conditions. Child poverty is an example of all that is wrong with our current economic model. Not cool at all, comrades.

step that we give in life. Having gratitude in our heart, we become blessed with every day miracles.

May this Christmas overwhelm you with the spirit of giving and you will be able to open your heart and make the effort to create the kind of memories that make an imprint on people’s hearts.

Living in the truth of who we are allows us to maintain a high level of integrity not only towards others but within ourselves. Living a life that is aligned to our values, we are able to do this because we are living in the truth of who we are. Our decisions are based on truth.

When I see myself in the mirror, I see the reflection of who I am. My identity is so strong that I know that what others think of me does not define me because I know it is not based on the truth of who I am. When we live our true selves, we are able to present ourselves with the truth of who we are. We will be able to develop deeper and more meaningful connections with others. We will be able to develop a high level of trust and compassion for others.

Truth is power. Living a life based on our values, we are making our integrity of who we are to glow and guide others in this Fantastic Journey of Life. May you have an

incredible Merry Christmas and Fantastic New year. Remember each person has come into this world as an incredible gift.



Broke Your Ankle? Beware this Life-threatening Complication!

By Sharon Austin

It is said no good deed goes unpunished and perhaps it's true. I was holding a spotlight for my supper guests so that they would not slip on the ice when I took a misstep and fell. Never one to make a fuss, I told my son-in-law, "just help me up and I'll be ok." I walked to the door, up the stairs, down the hall and collapsed on my bed. Those were the last steps I would take for almost three months. By morning I knew by the intense pain and swelling that my ankle was broken. It turned out to be a very bad break and I was not a candidate for crutches or a walking cast. On the way home from the hospital we rented a wheelchair and I began the painful and isolated journey of the disabled. My son and my sister who live thousands of miles away called me almost every day to keep my spirits up. My cats and my little dog were a great comfort to me as they slept beside me as I lay with my leg elevated on a pillow. I was determined to do everything I could for myself and soon I was cooking, sweeping the floors, and even changing the bed from the wheelchair. There were two things that I could not do; drive to town for groceries or get downstairs to do the laundry. My husband and my daughter, who lives nearby, took care of those chores.

After eight weeks I was so happy that my x-ray was fine and I could have the cast removed. I thought that I would be able to get right up and walk but something was terribly wrong. My leg from the knee down was very swollen, red, and quite warm to the touch. When I called the orthopedic surgeon I was told if I had any concerns about my leg I should go to emergency. At the emergency, the doctor told me that swelling after being in a cast was common and I should walk one mile a day. "I'd love to," I told him, "If I could walk a single step." My son was getting married over 4000 miles away and I asked the doctor if it was safe to fly with a swollen leg. He assured me that there was no problem. By this time, the only boots I could wear were my- 32 degree chore boots and I couldn't wear a shoe. I really wanted to be there for the wedding so I flew all across the country, six hours in the air plus a stop over. I had asked for assistance and the airport personnel met me with a wheelchair and took me right to my gate. My sons met me at the airport with a rented wheelchair and I had a wonderful time at the wedding despite the pain.

Back home, my leg continued to swell so I went to my family doctor. He assured me everything was fine and set me up for physio. Around this time my daughter called to tell me that she had a terrible dream that I died from a blood clot. The physiotherapist was a lovely young woman in her twenties who told me my ankle was far too swollen to begin any exercises. Then she asked if I had been checked for

a blood clot and a chill went down my spine. The next day was my last appointment with the orthopedic surgeon. His assistant told me that my final x-ray showed that the bones were healed and I could go. "I must see the doctor," I told him. He was not pleased but at length the doctor came in. "Your x-ray is fine," he told me, "you don't need a follow-up appointment." "I think I have a blood clot," I blurted as I showed him my swollen leg. "That's highly unlikely," he said, "You don't have the risk factors but I can send you for an ultrasound."

The ultrasound showed that I had deep vein thrombosis; a very large blood clot in my thigh was restricting blood flow to my lower leg. I was put on the blood thinner Xeralto right away and I took it for three months. Slowly the clot dissolved and my leg began to return to normal. By June, six months after I broke my ankle, I was able to walk with a footed cane and by July I could walk quite well. Understandably, I have lost all faith in doctors, and I hope this story helps someone to avoid the needless pain and suffering that I went through.

If you have been immobilized by a broken bone you may be at risk for a blood clot. Watch for these signs: Pain, swelling, redness and heat in the affected limb. Ask for that ultrasound! I never should have flown all across the country twice with a huge blood clot in my leg. I am so thankful that the Lord protected me from a heart attack or stroke and I lived to tell my tale.

Survivor

By Janice Reed

You ask the question
That I have asked myself countless times
And always the answer is the same....
I stayed because I couldn't leave....
I was bound by invisible chains,
Fettered by lies, threats, coercion, poverty, illness, weariness
With fear a constant companion.....
I was judged by the good men and women of

the church
Found wanting by others
Deserted by family
Friendless, penniless, resourceless
I endured
I survived
And finally I was free

I ask the question
That you have voiced so many times
And always the answer is the same....
I stayed because I couldn't leave

I was a victim of violence
Beaten, threatened, invalidated
Robbed of human rights
Without possessions
Or identity
And unless you have been there
You cannot understand
Unless you've walked that path
You cannot know....
For that I am thankful
Because it means you are free.

A short opine

By Rodney Graham, Winnipeg Street Sheet

Spur of the moment rant about something I've been pondering for years. I've come to the conclusion that it's a good idea. Shelters are run by soulless, mean spirited people and a system that is designed to fail - poverty pimps and heartless bureaucrats, some of whom are psychopaths.

The problem with this plan, although it would be much cheaper than the shelter system and the 'industries of misery' who make a nice salary off the backs of the poor - This is the main problem:

Public intolerance. And this is basically the main problem facing the homeless. The homeless are not "a problem". It's the general public, bureaucrats, and police who are the "problem".

People are increasingly hostile to the presence of the poor in society. As upscale cafes and drug hangouts (businesses who sell alcohol to the well off) on sidewalks increase - the space for the homeless decreases. The well off are insinuating themselves (Esp businesses) into public space and the poor are being shunted into the cracks and dark corners...

I think this is the best, and most just solution for the homeless - to give them their own space on the street - in public. In public because public space should belong to everyone regardless of status. Anyone who has traveled much at all will tell you the homeless are, and have always been in society - they are in the public - always have been.

They are free, they control to their own will as they can, their own destiny, they are

not treated as much like felons as they are in institutions, they have some ability to band together for protection (The police over-police and under-protect them), it has been this way all over the world for centuries - centuries ...It's time to break from the police state we're in which is controlled by the status quo and the chambers of commerce.

I think it's time for the public to be reasonable and it's time for the public to take responsibility in this small way - instead of leaving it for the wolves who guard the hen house in our sick, twisted, hypocritical society.

The homeless will never go away. We need to accept them. There's an old proverb that goes like this: The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. Acceptance, responsibility, and tolerance - Justice.