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Above: a residential school survivor shares her story at the Truth and Reconciliation Conference in Edmonton
Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report - - story on pages 3 and 4



By Linda Dumont

I skimmed over the pages of recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report that outlines the need for actions to help the survivors of the residential schools and their descendants. The new Trudeau government has already acknowledged the need to address the issues and to take action, and that is hopeful for the indigenous people of Canada.

In 2014 I attended the Truth and Reconciliation conference that was held in Edmonton and listened

Hope for change

to survivors share their experiences in the residential schools. Person after person spoke with the help of a support person, often with tears, sometimes with anger, sharing the inhumanity of the treatment they endured. Some descendants of survivors also spoke about how they, too, have been impacted. That legacy is shared by almost every Aboriginal person in Canada.

As a woman, who was married to a First Nations husband (my ex husband, whom I divorced in 1990), I am a survivor of the fallout from residential schools. My children's grandmother was taken from her home at the age of five, when a priest and a Mounty came to the home and apprehended her along with her seven year old cousin. They traveled on a long overnight train ride to Grouard, and the residential school became her home until she was released back into the community at 16 years of age. My ex-husband was her first child.

Having been institutionalized, with no idea of family, his mother had no parenting skills. He was taken by child welfare and raised in foster homes. At the foster home where he lived from the age of

three until he was 14, they had another foster child, a boy a few years younger than him. That child was Caucasian, and treated like a son by the family, but my ex-husband, being Aboriginal, was treated differently. The foster brother got a huge present at Christmas, while he got a small dinky toy. Years later when the foster mother passed away, the foster brother inherited the house and everything else.

My ex husband lacked the skills to be a husband and father, and to support a family. We moved 18 times during our marriage, and he was unemployed much of the time. After years of abuse and deprivation, I finally left him, taking our three children with me to start over again. My experience is all too common among women married to residential school survivors and descendants of survivors.

Prime Minister John A. Macdonald wanted to get rid of the savage and assimilate the Aboriginal peoples in one generation to make it safe for immigrants coming from Europe to settle the west, but instead he succeeded in creating a legacy of dysfunction.

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Truth and Reconciliation Commission releases final report

By Allan Sheppard

At almost 4,000 pages the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)—presented to Prime Minister Trudeau and his government on 15 December—is equivalent to 10 or more typical non-fiction volumes. The Executive Summary alone comprises 400 pages, plus 130 pages of bibliography and endnotes. By any standards, it is a heavy document with weighty content.

TRC Chair Justice Murray Sinclair and commissioners Dr. Marie Wilson and Chief Wilton Littlechild spent six years looking into the history and consequences of Canada's residential school policy—an undisguised effort at forced assimilation—for the education of 150,000 indigenous children in all parts of Canada for about a century after Confederation.

(Many thousands more First Nations and Inuit children, who went to day schools, boarding schools, Métis, and indigenous Newfoundlanders, who shared similar experiences, were not included in the TRC's mandate and remain to be heard and compensated, Sinclair said in an interview with the CBC's Rosemary Barton (Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report points to 'growing crisis' for indigenous

youth, CBC News, 14 December 2015). Nor, according to Sinclair, are that excluded group included in the 3,200 named children who died from various causes while at residential school.)

Predictably and unfortunately few Canadians—probably none of those who might benefit from an open-minded reading—will plow through all 4,000 page. A few may tackle the shorter *The Survivors Speak*, and *Calls to Action* (recommendations). Many will simply reject or ignore the report's existence and message.

Over time, we may find that indigenous youth will get the most use and benefit from the report. The full text has been published in five Aboriginal languages, in addition to English and French: Mi'kmaq, Ojibwa, Inuktitut, Cree and Dené. If Prime Minister Trudeau follows through on his commitment to implement all 94 TRC recommendations, and if First Nations leaders and educators manage well the increased control and funding of education and

language included in the recommendations, the report may lead to broader and deeper teaching of Aboriginal children and youth their many languages, cultures, and histories. That in turn may lead new generations to read, embrace, and live up to the aspirations of the report in one of their languages. Sinclair reminds us that indigenous children and youth are most at risk, if the spirit and recommendations of the report do not result in positive change and enlightened policies—just as their forbears were most at risk from the assimilationist policies of Canada's first century. They are also the best hope, perhaps the last hope, of better things to come for themselves and for the country.

Sinclair concludes his interview on a hopeful note: "I absolutely do think that things are changing." "Now the real work begins for the rest of the country," he added. It has already started in many Aboriginal communities across Canada.



Truth and
Reconciliation
Commission of Canada

Each of the seven flames in the circle of the TRC's logo represents one of the Seven Sacred Teachings - Truth, Humility, Honesty, Wisdom, Respect, Courage and Love.

The Impact of Residential Schools today



By Allan Sheppard

Rosemary Barton: - Give people a sense of how this (the legacy of residential schools in Canada) has affected people today.

Commissioner Murray Sinclair: The legacy of residential schools and government actions toward indigenous people over the years since confederation is staggering. Every social condition measurable in Canadian society places Aboriginal people at the most disadvantaged position of all people in the country. They have the highest unemployment rate, the biggest gap in income earnings; the number of Aboriginal children who are in care, the number Aboriginal people who are incarcerated; the health problems and the illnesses. The life expectancy rates are the lowest in the country. The housing is poor. Water supplies are poor. Just the social living conditions that Aboriginal people face are attributable to the way they've been treated and mistreated by over the years—and by society.—Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report points to 'growing crisis' for indigenous youth, CBC News, 14 December 2015

Going straight to the point...

From Decoding the new language of racial hierarchy, Globe and Mail on line, 19 December 2015

“The notion that success is a product of good genes, rather than surroundings and circumstances, has an obvious ideological appeal to people who would rather not spend public money mending wrongs. So they seize upon crumbs: Yes, some aspects of intelligence have been shown to be passed on to children – but only when parents and children are all more or less middle-class.

“Poverty and deprivation have a much larger effect in lowering IQ and other key measures; only when they're eliminated does any heritability of intelligence appear.

“With no support from scientists or their research for theories of racial success and failure, what we are left with are slogans and clichés that justify inaction – exactly how they were used the last time around.”

–Doug Saunders

TRC commissioners on surviving

In their Preface to *The Survivors Speak*, a volume of the final report of the TRC Commissioners Sinclair, Littlechild, and Wilson seem to challenge creative and assertive indigenous men and women to take the material offered by survivors in their stories and use it to create a new narrative about their peoples, working from a positive, uplifting understanding of survival and survivors.

They write, “At the beginning of the Commission's work, we questioned the use of the word 'Survivor.' It seemed to be a limiting, almost pejorative word. We saw it as referring to someone who

was 'just getting by,' or 'beaten down.' We endeavoured to find an alternative, more suitable, word to ascribe to those who came out of the Indian residential schools. However, over time, we have developed a whole new respect for the word. In 'Invictus' (the title means 'invincible' or 'undefeated' in Latin), the English poet William Ernest Henley (1849–1903) wrote these words:

“Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

“In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

“Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

“It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

“ A Survivor is not just someone who 'made it through' the schools, or 'got by' or was 'making do.' A Survivor is a person who persevered against and overcame adversity. The word came to mean someone who emerged victorious though not unscathed, whose head was 'bloody but unbowed.' It referred to someone who had taken all that could be thrown at
Continued on page 4

Where will you live when you die?

By Sharon Hample

Every Tuesday afternoon I take my 89 year old aunt out for lunch. Her favourite place is the Commodore. This place feels a little like home and we enjoy seeing all the different people that come in. The staff at the Commodore make everyone feel equally welcome.

There was one fellow in particular that caught my attention. His name was Francis. I asked the waitress about him. She told me he was a favourite regular at the restaurant. Francis would come in every day at about the same time for a cup of coffee and sometimes he'd have a meal. He was a bit of a fixture at the restaurant. He'd been coming in for years.

If my aunt and I were lucky, we'd be at the restaurant the same time Francis would come in. He was an old man; Aboriginal. He wore a big black cowboy hat and had two long braids. Francis seemed like a quiet, humble man; not too complicated. Sometimes his friends would come in for a meal and there were great, joy filled hugs shared all around amongst them.

On one Tuesday afternoon my aunt and I came into the restau-

rant and everyone was looking so gloomy. This was a little upsetting because whenever we came in we would, right away, start joking with the staff. Everyone was usually so jolly and good natured. But this day was SO different. I asked "What's up? Did something happen"? One of the girls told me that Francis had a massive heart attack on his way home from the restaurant the night before. Everyone was still in shock. They'd lost a friend. I shared their feelings. I didn't know Francis personally, but he still took up a little space in my heart.

So, although we can't see Francis in his body anymore, he still lives in the hearts of many people. And he didn't even know he was so loved for just being who he was.

This summer I happened to be living downtown for a couple of months; around 118 Street and Jasper Ave. there were a lot of homeless people collecting bottles in the lane where I parked my car. This one day as I was getting out of my car, I was met with a very odd sight. There were a man and woman coming down the lane towards me. The man was pushing a shopping cart with the woman sitting inside on top of a pile of

blankets and clothes. They were both quite drunk. I caught their eye and we said hello. We chatted a bit. They seemed happy to talk with someone. They were very down on their luck. The woman told me that she had broken her leg and couldn't walk.

Before I left to go to my apartment I gave them a \$5 bill. Their gratitude was huge. I didn't expect for \$5 to make someone so happy. They appeared to me like two innocent children. Also, as I turned to go, the man told me, very sincerely and without bitterness or resentment, how hard it was to push "her" around. No resentment. Just a burdened sadness.

What struck me so hard, and still stays with me to this day is how they laughed and joked with me even though they were experiencing such extreme hardships.

I don't know whatever became of these two, but I know where they live.....in my heart!!

No matter who we are or how we appear or how little we have: the only legacy we ever leave behind is the love we leave in someone's heart.

May you all live long.
HAPPY NEW YEAR, my friends.

Impact of Residential schools them and remained standing at the end. It came to mean someone who could legitimately say 'I am still here!' For that achievement, Survivors deserve our highest respect. But, for that achievement, we also owe them the debt of doing the right thing. Reconciliation is the right thing to do, coming out of this history. "

The negative understanding of "survivor" remains a persistent, if

not dominant, theme in the discourse of non-Indigenous Canadians around efforts to recognize, accommodate, and integrate (not assimilate, but embrace as fellow citizens who can proudly be different but not less equal and worthy than the rest of us) our First Nations and peoples into Canada in ways that respect their (and our) dignity and sovereignty—to be the masters of their fates and the captains of their souls, with the

resources they need to do and be so. If young Indigenous leaders and an emerging band of traditional and contemporary artists respond to the implied or actual challenge in the Commissioners' words by forging and sharing a more positive understanding of survival, Canada's Indigenous peoples and the rest of us will be better for their efforts and achievements.

The Broken Chocolate Heart



Jennifer (centre) with Donald and Sharon Austin

Photo by Linda Dumont

By Sharon Austin

Being a Teacher Assistant or Educational Assistant as they are now called, for more than twenty-five years, I could write a book about all the special children I worked with and all the experiences we had along the way. I started working as a TA in New Brunswick way back in 1987, not many years after the hospital school had closed and children with special needs were integrated into the mainstream classrooms. It was a real change for the students as well as the teachers. Some of the teachers I worked with embraced the challenge of helping a child with special needs enjoy the classroom experience; others resented the extra workload of specialized lessons and modified gym classes.

One of my first students was a lovely ten year old girl with raven black hair and sparkly brown eyes. Jennifer was born with cerebral palsy so she used a motorized wheelchair to get around. She

had only partial use of one hand so printing was a challenge and her speech had also been affected making her hard to understand. I was Jennifer's assistant for six years from Grade Four through Grade Nine. Working closely with her all those years, she became like one of the family and we are still good friends to this day.

Around Valentine's Day I visited Jennifer in the group home where she now lives with seven other residents. It always surprises me to see the threads of silver in her black hair and the fine wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, but then I have to remember that she is over forty. Years have a way of swirling by so quickly, especially as you get older. She is happy in the group home where she has her own pretty pink room with a television and laptop. She even has a boyfriend at the sheltered workshop where she goes to work on weekdays. She shows me all her Facebook friends, two of

which are my grown-up sons in B.C., and as always we reminisce about the old times. On her wall there are pictures of my family, my daughter's wedding, and one of a young Jennifer in her wheelchair. She has a big smile on her face and on her tray there is a huge pile of chocolate hearts. Standing behind her is Mr. Hill, one hand on Jennifer's shoulder, the other holding a silver flask. "That Mr. Hill," she says fondly, "Grade Six was my best year ever; he was so nice!"

It was my best year as a TA, too. Mr. Hill was a small round man in his sixties, who was new to the inner city school. At first the Grade Six boys snickered thinking he was an easy mark, but they soon found that Mr. Hill was a little man who cast a big shadow. His kindness, enthusiasm, and encouragement brought out the best in everyone. Although he never raised his voice the class worked together in perfect harmony. He rarely took a recess break as he was always counseling someone or helping someone catch up on schoolwork. Mr. Hill made every occasion a joyous celebration. When Jennifer went away for back surgery we had a big going away party with hot-dogs and chips and pop that Mr. Hill bought. I made a large chocolate cake and we played games all afternoon.

Mr. Hill always kept a silver flask on his desk, which he would sip from now and then. In the staff room one of the teachers cornered me. "What's it like working

The Essence of Time

By Ryan Robertson

The sand has run out of the hour glass. 2015 is now a year of the past. Was it a year on the positive side of the ledger or were you, like many, who got buried in the shuffle of bad times experienced in Alberta?

It suddenly became more of a year of dog eat dog, far more than the normal as individuals and families struggled to make ends meet.

Those caught in the money game became very nervous as car payments, mortgages and raising families or simply keeping your head above water became very difficult. This chaos is common-place in Alberta as now the price of a barrel of oil is \$35 to \$36.

What does this do for all the high

falouting carefree people who have had it made for a long while? It simply deflates them and in some cases panics them for they know not what to do.

It is definitely time to form a distinct middle class again. The way it is there is a rich and a poor class and nothing in between. It is time now, as we are all aware, to change the way it is and to develop a new system where we are equal to each other and truly care for one another.

Christmas 2015 came and went. It was joyful to be with family and friends once again. Time seemed to stand still and we clung to the precious memories being made.



Then came the reality of the New Year fast approaching. The hour glass flipped to 2016. As the sand begins to run out of this new year stop the bleeding and make us carry on as proud Albertans once again.

The Broken Chocolate Heart - continued from page 6

with that Mr. Hill? I hear he's a recovering alcoholic." I could tell by the shrewd look in her eye and the twist of her lip that she was after gossip.

"He's the best teacher I ever worked with," I said truthfully. She huffed and started to walk away.

"What about the flask he's always carrying around, is there whiskey in the flask?"

"I'm sure it's water," I said stoutly and left the room. I never cared for gossip.

For Valentine's Day, another party was planned. Jennifer was bouncing with joy when her best friend gave her a big chocolate heart. She took it out to the play-

ground and was showing it to everyone. I was having lunch when I heard Jennifer coming down the hall sobbing broken-heartedly. A Grade Eight boy had grabbed her heart, broken it in two and eaten half of it. She was so upset that she hardly enjoyed the party.

The next day, when we entered the classroom, Jennifer's desk was piled high with chocolate hearts and heart shaped cookies. It seemed that almost every child in the class had brought Jennifer a treat. She was so happy and I was very touched as these were inner city kids from poor families, who didn't have much themselves. That is when I took the picture that's pinned up on Jennifer's wall.

Looking up at Mr. Hill, she playfully poked at his silver flask with

her one good hand. "I know what you got in there," she said. I held my breath. Had the vicious gossip even touched an innocent like Jennifer?

"Kindness," she said loudly.

"Out of the mouths of babes," I thought in relief. Jennifer had spoken with a wisdom far beyond her years for truly Mr. Hill had a flask of kindness that he poured out to everyone.

Jennifer and I spent a pleasant afternoon together eating chocolate and talking about things long ago. We always remember Mr. Hill, long passed away, who left his legacy of kindness in the heart of every student in that class.

Those Who Have Gone Before Us



By Sharon Spencer

Many in the family of God are acutely aware that the biggest love holiday is just around the corner. Long before Valentine's Day arrives the stores will be pitching their wares to consumers. Red hearts will be everywhere, reminders on TV and in magazines displaying the best way to express our love to an esteemed loved one. And wouldn't it be great to get the affection expressed in dinners and roses flourished on us from someone special?

Many of us are still grieving loved ones who have gone to heaven ahead of us. The love theme seems to intensify the loss for them as memories flood back and make us acutely aware of the loved ones we miss. To a large extent this grief is increased by the holiday. And media doesn't help by flooding us with images of diamonds, roses and beautiful people exchanging tokens of love and things we only can dream of. Maybe we have never experienced this so it can be a hard time of the year.

If your loved one is taken from you how do you deal with this? I know about this first hand because four years ago my only brother was beaten to death on the streets of

Saint John, New Brunswick. Our only comfort was in the fact that he was a Christian. He was escorted to heaven by the angels and even seen in by my sister in a vision in which he said, "Michelle, I'm singing". This was his favourite thing to do.

Almost a year later my only daughter, Sarah, was killed in a car accident right in front of her children. It was a terrible shock. I can't even describe what it did to us. In my book, *Mama's Chickens*, I wrote this dedication to her.

Sarah, Sarah, Sarah there must be a hundred times a day you drift into my thoughts reminding me you are no longer with us. Oh yes, we know you're in heaven watching over us and you're happier than you've ever been on earth. But you have left us all behind like the walking wounded, blindly trying to feel our way back into sanity in a world without you.

This kind of explains how I felt the grief and longing. But God found many ways to comfort me. Many had visions of her in heaven singing and dancing and riding horses, her favourite thing to do. One day I said to God that I needed assurance myself not second hand from others. I opened my Facebook and there was a drawing of Jesus holding the crown of life over a kneeling girl. She had the face of Sarah to a T. That day, in my mind, I took her out of the coffin and put her in Heaven. Because I know a lot about Heaven, I know she is happier than she has ever been and I will see her one day.

If you are uncertain of where

you would go if you died you need to settle it right now. You were never promised tomorrow, only this moment in time. Christ died for the ungodly - that's every one born through Adam and Adam sinned. We are a fallen race but God's only son was sent to redeem us. The sins of the world were laid on his back. His last words were, "It is finished." Now salvation is freely offered to all.

What must I do? Confess I'm a sinner and ask him into my life. He will not come in unless you ask. It is a humbling of the heart - your will being submitted to his will.. This is my favourite verse: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

My ticket to heaven is bought and some day it will be punched and joyfully I will be joined to my daughter again.

Valentine's Day

Each year on February 14th, many people exchange cards, candy, gifts or flowers with their special "valentine." The day of romance we call Valentine's Day is named for a Christian martyr and dates back to the 5th century, but has origins in the Roman holiday Lupercalia.



I'm a born loser

By Joanne Benger

1. Everyone wants to borrow my money; no one offers to lend me money.
2. Strange dogs bite my ankles.
3. As soon as I buy modern new clothes the style changes.
4. Feral cats pee on my porch.
5. When I go walking in my best exercise outfit, strangers stop and give me returnable cans and bottles.\
6. The power goes off when the freezer is full.
7. If I leave a massage, no one ever calls back.
8. I spend half my life on hold.
9. Unexpected visitors always arrive when I'm flat broke and the cup boards are empty.
10. I run into rich friends on my way to the hairdressers and looking my worst.
11. The hot water runs out when I'm covered in soap.
12. When I find a store I like, it closes.
13. If I have an early appointment, the alarm doesn't go off.
14. The "Sorry We Are closed" sign comes up just as I reach the door.
15. No one tells me the meeting was cancelled.
16. I never have the right change for the vending machine.
17. The freebies always run out before I arrive.
18. I still haven't won the Publishers' Clearing House sweepstakes.
19. When I am walking, cars splash me with mud.
20. Bills arrive early but the cheque is never in the mail.
21. Expenses go up as my income goes down.
22. When I visit a friend in the nursing home, the nurse thinks I belong there and doesn't want to let me leave.
23. The light always turns red just as I reach the corner.
24. As soon as I discover a TV show I like, they drop it.
25. The caller always hangs up just as I reach the phone.
26. When lining up I always get in the slowest queue.
27. If I leave my umbrella behind, it rains.
28. If I am desperate, I am sure to see an "Out of Order" sign.



St. Therese Novena Rose Prayer

O, little Therese of the Child Jesus, please pick for me a rose from the heavenly garden and send it to me as a message of love.

O, little flower of Jesus, ask God today to grant the favours I now place with confidence in your hands. (mention specific requests)

St. Therese, help me to always believe as you did in God's great love for me so that I might imitate your "Little Way" every day.

Amen

Affirmation Novena

For nine nights at nine o'clock, light a candle and repeat, "I am a blessed child of God, I am well. I am happy. Great abundance is on its way because as God's child, I am empowered to create miracles."

Sylvia Browne.



True loveis not tough

By Angelique Branston

The troubled teen was told by her grandmother and brother how much they both loved her, that they didn't want to lose her like they had lost her mother. She had been brutally murdered when they children were in elementary school. The grandmother moved out of the city with the troubled teen and she now lives in a reservation town. She has lived there for about five years and is a young woman, who still needs to be taken care of. Her grandmother drives her each week to AA. The young woman's days are filled with visiting with family, and working on her art, as well as keeping in touch with her brother who works in the camps up north now.

I was talking with her the other day, She was telling me how the youth she had been partying with jumped a train to Vancouver. She recently found out that they passed away.

"That could have been me" she said, "I almost went with them. They were telling me that they were my real family, that no one cared about me." She had a catch in her voice. "I knew my kokum and brother were home, worrying about me so I went home to the people, who I knew really loved me".

This girl's grandmother had survived the residential schools. She has PTSD, and other health issues. She may at times speak forcefully, and she has many flaws as each of us does.. But the way she has unfailingly loves her grandchildren I find to be admirable. She gave her granddaughter a second chance at life. She could have easily said that she couldn't handle her anymore. Her unconditional love is what pulled her granddaughter from a life lost in the system, or out on the streets.

This is the love that I know, that regardless of the obstacles and barriers, love is the standard that covers our frailties and weakness. It gives courage and strength when we need it. Love is many things, but it is not "tough".

Why?

By Vivian Risby and Chewy

Why do people pick on the homeless? Are they better than us? All pick on the weak and the sick. People are just trying to make money. Don't mind if they pick bottles. Not everybody came from parents who are rich. Take a look around you someday You may not have a home either. Give a person a chance, not a person was born homeless. Take a look at yourself, you may be in his or her shoes one day.

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2. Get a subscription to ASN - for \$45 a year the paper will be mailed out.

3. Become a patron - make a commitment to donate monthly to help with production costs.

All money raised will go towards production costs for Alberta Street News and for vendor events.

Contact Linda Dumont at 780-428-0805
dumontlc@hotmail.com



Their Story – Vendor Phillip Dainard

By Linda Dumont

Phillip Dainard can be found selling papers out in front of the Strathcona Farmers' Market most Saturdays. He has been an Alberta Street News vendor intermittently since 2004.

Phillip is from Golden B.C. where he lived until he was in Grade Four, then he and his family moved to Vallyview, Alberta. In the late 70's or early 80's he moved to Edmonton, where he worked as a framing carpenter for "years and years".

"I suffered from depression," Phillip said, "And I am an alcoholic. It got to where I couldn't hold my job anymore about 2002. I didn't realize how sick I was until I fell into the street life. I picked bottles, sold papers and panhandled to survive. I was in and out of jail."

In 2008, Phillip went to Gunn Centre, an alcohol treatment centre, and sobered up. When he came out of treatment, he was housed through Capital Regional Housing Project. But in 2010 he fell back into alcohol and drugs.

"I bounced around on the street again until 2014," he said, "Then I went back to Gunn Centre for 19 months. While there, I was hospitalized at the University Hospital for two months and got my medication straightened out. Then I got housing through Homeward Trust Housing First in September, 2015. I'm on AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped) now, but I'm still having a hard time with the alcohol and drugs again. I'm trying to meet some people that don't drink and maybe volunteer in the community where I live, and get back to carpentry again."

Phillip was one of the people picked up by the police in the Sweatbox incident in 2004, when police rounded up drunk people on Whyte Avenue and drove them around for more than three hours in the back of a paddy wagon on a very hot day, then dropped them off in north east Edmonton. Eventually, two officers were found guilty on several charges related to the incident.

"I didn't testify," Phillip said, "I was afraid because the cops threatened me. I didn't receive any compen-



sation but the others did. They each got about \$2000."

Phillip said he enjoys selling papers because he gets to meet and talk to people and he makes money to subsidize his AISH cheques.

PERSONAL MEDICINE

Recovery does not occur in a vacuum



By Karen Peterson

“Mental health recovery is a journey of healing and transformation enabling a person with a mental health problem to live a meaningful life in a community of his or her choice while striving to achieve his or her full potential.”

-national consensus statement on mental health recovery, the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Indeed, recovery is a journey, not an end. For myself and the one in three Canadians affected by mental illness during their lifetimes, recovery does not necessarily mean a cure, but rather a

satisfying quality of life. What that entails differs from individual to individual.

Many of us are unable to work full time, and rely on assistance from the government or private disability pensions. As such, our income may be much lower than average. We may live in poverty.

Relying on the government for income can be a hard pill to swallow. But even with the generous raise to the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) of a few years ago, the alternative – hospitalization, would be much more costly to the government.

As I noted in an earlier column, there is a real scarcity of affordable housing for the disabled. Safe and

comfortable dwelling places are necessary for a good quality of life. Sadly, many spend the majority of their income on rent, and then do not have enough left for healthy food and decent clothing.

Stigma is a very real problem, and some landlords are still reluctant to rent to the mentally ill. The outcry when the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta proposed to build supportive housing in the downtown core is a case in point. Fortunately, that organization was able to find a more accepting neighbourhood in which to construct the facility, and so far, it is going very well. But not all persons suffering from mental illness can live in a community of their choosing.

Still, given the hurdles of poverty and ghettoization faced by many mental health consumers, a meaningful life is possible. While this meaning may not come from career or status, it could come from relationships with other people or religious ideology. Perhaps, as stated by a woman in a group I attended, one can take pride in leaving a small footprint on the planet, by recycling and taking public transportation or walking or cycling.

The Ten Fundamental Components of Recovery, as stated by SAMHSA, are as follows:

“Self-direction. Consumers lead, control, exercise choice over, and determine their own path of recovery by optimizing autonomy, independence, and control of resources to achieve a

self-determined life. By definition, the recovery process must be self-directed by the individual, who defines his or her own life goals and designs a unique path toward those goals.

Individualized and person centered. There are multiple pathways to recovery based on an individual's unique strengths and resiliencies as well as his or her needs, preferences, experiences (including past trauma), and cultural background in all its diverse representations. Individuals also identify recovery as being an ongoing journey and an end result as well as an overall paradigm for achieving wellness and optimal mental health.

Empowerment. Consumers have the authority to choose from a range of options and to participate in all decisions—including the allocation of resources—that will affect their lives and are educated and supported in so doing. They have the ability to join with other consumers to collectively and effectively speak for themselves about their needs, wants, desires, and aspirations. Through empowerment, an individual gains control of his or her own destiny and influences the organizational and societal structures in his or her life.

Holistic. Recovery encompasses an individual's whole life, including mind, body, spirit, and community. Recovery embraces all aspects of life, including housing, employment, education, mental health and health-care treatment and services, complementary and naturalistic services, addictions treatment, spirituality, creativity, social networks, community participation, and family supports as determined by the person. Families, providers, organizations, systems, communi-

ties, and society play crucial roles in creating and maintaining meaningful opportunities for consumer access to these supports.

Nonlinear. Recovery is not a step-by-step process but one based on continual growth, occasional setbacks, and learning from experience. Recovery begins with an initial stage of awareness in which a person recognizes that positive change is possible. This awareness enables the consumer to move on to fully engage in the work of recovery.

Strengths based. Recovery focuses on valuing and building on the multiple capacities, resiliencies, talents, coping abilities, and inherent worth of individuals. By building on these strengths, consumers leave stymied life roles behind and engage in new life roles (eg, partner, caregiver, friend, student, employee). The process of recovery moves forward through interaction with others in supportive, trust-based relationships.

Peer support. Mutual support—including the sharing of experiential knowledge and skills and social learning—plays an invaluable role in recovery. Consumers encourage and engage other consumers in recovery and provide each other with a sense of belonging, supportive relationships, valued roles, and community.

Respect. Community, systems, and societal acceptance and appreciation of consumers—including protecting their rights and eliminating discrimination and stigma—are crucial in achieving recovery. Self-acceptance and regaining belief in one's self are particularly vital. Respect ensures the inclusion and full participation of consumers in all aspects of their lives.

Responsibility. Consumers

have a personal responsibility for their own self-care and journeys of recovery. Taking steps toward their goals may require great courage. Consumers must strive to understand and give meaning to their experiences and identify coping strategies and healing processes to promote their own wellness.

Hope. Recovery provides the essential and motivating message of a better future—that people can and do overcome the barriers and obstacles that confront them. Hope is internalized but can be fostered by peers, families, friends, providers, and others. Hope is the catalyst of the recovery process. Mental health recovery not only benefits individuals with mental health disabilities by focusing on their abilities to live, work, learn, and fully participate in our society but also enriches the texture of American community life. America reaps the benefits of the contributions individuals with mental disabilities can make, ultimately becoming a stronger and healthier nation.”

From the Schizophrenia Bulletin article “Recovery From Schizophrenia: With Views of Psychiatrists, Psychologists, and Others Diagnosed With This Disorder”, Frederick J. Frese III¹, Edward L. Knight³ and Elyn Saks⁴

As we see, while recovery is a highly individual matter, it does not occur in a vacuum. The support of mental health professionals, family, friends and the community at large is needed to make recovery possible. I honestly feel that the situation is improving, thanks in large part to education and prominent figures being open about their battles with mental illness. But we have a long way to go.

HEALING WORDS



BY THE CMHA
WRITING FOR RECOVERY GROUP

JEALOUSY

By Lanky

Jealousy.
It has been in my memory.
A long time ago when the days
were young.
Daddy had a favourite son.
It wasn't me.
Jealousy.

It has kept me alive; alone, angrily.
A long time ago when the days
were young.
And my mind gravitated to venge-
ful fantasy.
He would steal my interests away,
one by one.
Daddy had a favourite son.
It wasn't me.
Jealousy.

We grew up together. I older than
he.

brother?" he'd say.
Daddy had a favourite son.
It wasn't me.
Jealousy.

Breaking glass and lighting fires,
adrenaline, the good feeling.
Slamming doors, and beating on a
sibling. Of three.
Vengeance is mine saith me, and
found out that my victims have
older clan.
Going home, the bad feeling.
Where my rage went from the floor
to the ceiling.
A bully was me, bourne out of
hatred for him. And a bully for a
dad.
Daddy had a favourite son.
It wasn't me.
Jealousy.

A production of jealousy is fantasy.

He consumed
my every
thought. And
was the subject
of my evil and
deeds.
He'd be brush-
ing girls off and
I'd be people
please.
Daddy had a
favourite son.
It wasn't me.
Jealousy.

Passion, a pow-
erful emotion,
misdirected.
Jealous passion,
without reason-
ing or reason
detected.
Hidden and
obvious aggres-
sion.
"Why aren't
you like your

Of manifest insanity; of rant and
rage.
Of self produced thoughts and
images of not being liked or loved,
frantically.
To beatings from dad and laying
them on the favourite son in stages.
How many times i wished i'd had a
gun.
For daddy's favourite son, it wasn't
me.
He made it a point you see.
Jealousy.

Ruminating on how i wasn't liked
and feeling unloved.
I was number one son. Felt like
zero.
Daddy had a favourite son, he was
daddy's hero.
I set out to prove i wasn't loved, by
no-one.
Jealousy.

I earned the reputation of being a
jerk.
Chicks would say a nice thing or
smile and i would smirk.
How could, anyone, like, me?
Daddy had a favourite son. It
wasn't me.
Jealousy.

I went from being a beggar for at-
tention, to crisis miester.
Seeking love and affection from my
makers.
A beating usually does the trick
from daddy, "call me mister".
Daddy had a favourite son, it
wasn't me.
When the days were young.
Jealousy.

How it has affected me, I still don't
know, favouritism.
It has caused a fray in my psyche, a
schism.

Revenge fantasies that was my

Continued on page 15

What Does Success Mean to You?

By **Linda Roan**

A study done by Strayer University in 2015 surveyed 2000 people ages 18 and over, on what success means to them. Only one in five people connected monetary wealth with being successful.

- Nearly 70% of people associate success with achieving personal goals.

- More than 65% defined success as having good relationships with friends and family.

- Some 60% said it's about loving what you do for a living.

A recent article in Edmonton Metro titled "Pinning hopes on new ways to a new you" states:

- 70% of us have stopped crash dieting

- 40% of us have dropped the low-carbs diet

Enjoying one's accomplishments and success comes down to making changes, hard work and determination. When we want to

achieve something bad enough, success will follow.

Have you ever tried to explain something to someone and they look back at you with a blank stare?

I recently experienced this while teaching an ESL (English as a Second Language) class. After

thinking I had successfully

explained a word

game to the class, one of the

students raised

her hand and said "Teacher, we

don't understand what you are telling us!"

After a few moments of laughter together,

I began explaining the game in a more

clear way. "Oh" they all said.

"That's how we

play the game!"

Success means different things to different people, but I think the feeling of accomplishment is the same for everyone.

Happy Valentines Day!

Become an Alberta Street News Vendor

Earn money selling papers!
Call Linda at 780-428-0805



Jealousy

plight, frightened of the world you see.

Daddy had a favourite son, It wasn't me.

He made it a point you see. When the days were young.

Jealousy.

Nice, nice, nice on the outside. Vicious on the in. Please the people, people pleaser, resenter of them all. I trusted my dog. Afraid of people, big and small. Daddy had a favourite son when the days were young. Double dare him to stare into to the sun.

And blind him with a dare. Tripping him all day.

Jealousy

Striking, out, striking inward. Thank god for that cardboard closet box.

As long as i stayed in my room and beat the box, a left then a right.

She would not tell dad. And when i wanted to be nice, i could come out. only polite.

Another beating saved, no welts on my back; butt or thighs.

Daddy had a favourite son, when the days were young, and hate was old

My mom. ma, she taught me how to handle the rage, temper she'd say.

And i'd punch that box almost every day, a left then a right, to calm me.

I loved my ma, my mommy. I was six.

Jealousy.

Gratitude for 2016



By Maria B.

Gratitude is being able to recognize the incredible role that we have in this life. Instead of expecting more, we must be of service to more people because when we lift others, we lift ourselves.

Gratitude or the art of being thankful should be part of our daily lives, not just something that is reserved for special occasions. When we have gratitude for everything in our lives on a daily basis, our mindset changes, our attitude changes; we become focused on the things that matter most but most of all, we open ourselves up for better things.

“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, and confusion into clarity.. It turns problems into gifts, failures into success, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for t

tomorrow.” - Melodie Beattie

“ Develop an attitude of gratitude, and give thanks for everything that happens to you, knowing that every step forward is a step toward achieving something bigger and better than your current situation.” -Brian Tracy

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” -John Fitzgerald Kennedy

“Whatever we are waiting for -- peace of mind, contentment, grace, the inner awareness of simple abundance-- it will surely come to us, but only when we are ready to receive it with an open and grateful heart.” -Sarah Ban Breathnach

Have you ever realized that when we are having a depression episode it is like going for a walk on a trail full of fog; you start feeling uneasy, scared and very anxious.

A powerful way to move out of

this anxious state is to stop focusing on our thoughts and start focusing on our heart.

By simply making a deliberate action of taking over our thoughts and shifting the attention to our heart, the anxious thoughts will dissipate slowly and the overwhelming feelings of the fog will start to dissipate.

Daily we must take over our thoughts and start feeling gratitude for everything that we have and all the persons that we have in our life. We waste so much time living in a world of affliction, worrying about tomorrow or living in the past.

Regular practice of gratitude will dramatically change our lives as the bodies chemistry begins to detoxify; there are unlimited benefits that gratitude can bring in our life.

To me gratitude is the connection that makes our Creator a powerful force in our lives and in the lives of others.

**FOR 2016 BE
GRATEFUL, BE KIND,
BE RELENTLESS AND
REMEMBER THAT
YOU ARE A GIFT TO
THE WORLD.**

Priceless

By Elizabeth Germain

Pearls are precious
So are our friends
Never take them for granted
Because it may end.
They cannot be replaced
By things or trends –
Who can face
The loss of a friend?
Treat them always
As precious gems.

Rob's Corner in Calgary



By Robert Champion

Rob's first say of the day

Life is a day to day challenge.

Sometimes you can be on top of the world and then in no time be at the bottom. Just got to make the best of what you have already got. Life is too short to bitch and complain. I know after my common law wife died, I went to be with my friends. I made it through OK. It'll be about three and a half years since my Lorna passed. I think the worst part is over. Being with friends was always important and always will be.

What's on my mind

Always is good to know that I have good friends out there and also knowing I'll meet and make new ones. Hopefully I'll meet a good woman someday and settle down for a the very last time, for the rest of time. After all, time is short and gets shorter as times goes on. I met someone. She knew

Lorna, my common law wife. I met her about ten years ago. She sold the Calgary Street Talk newspaper out of CUPS the same as I did. I believe she wrote poetry for the Street Talk paper. We have kind of been chumming around together for about two weeks. Amber is her name and she is a good hearted person, sincere, and a good cook. I know a few of them. She has a nursing degree.

Rob's last say of the day

Being who you are is important. Being truthful and honest is most important. Not hurting someone's feelings is right up there. Arguing and fighting won't accomplish much of anything except more of the same usually.

Heart of Hell

By Jodie Nerling

Disgusting and depressing
Not close to what it should
Repeatedly demeaning and discouraging
That just living in the hood.

The same thing every day
With no goal in sight
Nothing left to look forward to
Nor a dream to take flight.

You can find all the drugs you desire
Be it night or be it day
Twenty four/ seven their answer
They don't know any other way.

This is all that they want
Though they keep dying and aren't well
I guess this is what you get
When you live in the Heart of Hell.



Remembering Gary

By Marian Buhler Laleye

Gary is the sixth in our family of 13; the second son. We were all living on Jasper Avenue above our parent's shop – a café. When I used to see Gary around, he had often been put to work peeling potatoes. After business hours, our neighbours were the guests at the Cecil Hotel or the beer parlour patrons. When Gary turned 12, everything changed in about three weeks. Dad died, we moved to the Westmount community and Gary changed schools. He attended Grandin and St. Joseph's High Schools or Archbishop MacDonald, then studied at GMCC and the University of Alberta towards a Fine Arts degree. His work was displayed at the U of A and in private collections in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Arizona, Mexico and St. Louis, Missouri. Gary attended seminary and taught theology.

He started his period of homelessness at around the age of 46,

somewhat older than the average I believe. Leading to that, he lost his employment with the Alberta government and his wife took a package deal during the down sizing of the Klein era. Eventually the severance money ran out and they took asbestos removal training, but the jobs did not abound. When they were evicted, they got some accommodation space from a couple of my sisters. When his wife left, Gary was staying in Bruderheim but had to leave due to his inability to pay rent..

I came along to bring him and his portable belonging to Edmonton. I remember helping to get him into some rentals in the Strathcona area and that lasted about a year. During the past 15 years he has had little contact with the majority of the family. He had jobs with Labour Ready, but I believe he had an eviction in September 2001. His erotic rental payments could be attributed to his lack of a bank ac-

count and a bar at which they cashed his daily pay cheques if he bought a drink. However, one drink was usually not enough.

I didn't know how he could make it and I also knew I couldn't support him on my income. I was very upset at the idea, but the resources I had to provide support were limited. There are always ways to find meals and shelter (from my Employee Assistance Program) but resources that I suggested to Gary were dismissed. I think he did not want to be seen asking for help. My mother and I were the main family contacts sometimes for some food, a cup of tea or coffee or to borrow money. During the past 15 years he had little contact with the majority of the family. I don't know if there were many people for him to talk with so when he came into contact with one of us, he would talk.

I suspect that there were some huge disappointments for him and he



frequently spoke of a troubled relationship with Dad. He had resolved to try and work things out, but then Dad died. He had relationships that died and a marriage that ended abruptly.

One thing that I feel very strongly is that he missed his brother's funeral. In May 2008, Tom died and we didn't have a way to contact Gary. He turned up when he turned up. He got the news when he came by my mother's and was told when the funeral would be. That day we waited, but he did not arrive by the time we had to leave. He may have just missed me. He went to St. Joseph's Basilica and waited in the church. Later he returned to Mom's and was told by some relatives that he couldn't go in. Personally I felt really sad and I believe he did, too.

I don't know if there were many people for him to talk with and he gave fairly sparse details on how he was living and if he had any acquaintances in the homeless community.

I wondered how it would be for a person to not have small comforts such as a place to sit and rest at the end of the day. I knew he spent a lot of time walking and found some place in one of the parks to sleep. I also knew about how some types will target people who appear vulnerable and I didn't want to think about that.

In 2010, Gary did get housing in a small Saskatchewan town where one of our sisters had some properties. She took him out there and these last years were spent in Saskatchewan. He also found Simon Templar who was his canine buddy for the last two or three years

That was not a Saul to Paul transformation. Gary still maintained his association with alcohol and he had run-ins with some townspeople



because of his unorthodox behaviours at times. He did have reasonably steady contact with family, when he was on good terms with my sister.

Gary passed away on December 23, 2015.



International street newspaper conference will be in Athens, Greece next June

By Linda Dumont

This year, for the first time, I am planning on attending the International Network of Street Papers (INSP) conference. It will be in Athens, Greece in June, and will be attended by editors, publishers and other staff from street papers world wide. A few vendors attend as well.

The INSP is an organization that supports and develops street paper projects all over the world. It spans 120 papers from 40 countries, with a combined readership of 6 million per edition. INSP was founded in July 1994 and the network was initially managed by The Big Issue. INSP's headquarters are in Glasgow, Scotland. The network organizes a yearly conference. It also supports new street papers in the developing world and runs the Street News Service (SNS). In 2008 it began giving annual awards for top street newspaper journalism in several categories. INSP cofounder Mel Young also organizes the annual Homeless World Cup.[9]

When the North American Street Newspaper Association was holding conferences in North American cities, I attended conferences regularly, but since they joined the INSP in 2012, I have found it hard to justify the expense of travelling to Europe for a conference. Alberta Street News has never had the funding to pay for representatives to attend conferences like most of the other street newspapers, whose editors attend as part of their job.

Alberta Street News has only been represented at an INSP conference twice— back in 2004 when Britney White, who wrote for

the paper, attended, and in 2012 when Angelique Branston went to the Munich conference. They took back issues of the paper, and brought back reports on what other street papers are doing as well as copies of many of them. Most of the papers were in foreign languages, so I could only read a few of the issues from the conference, but homelessness is a world wide concern regardless of language.

Since then, vendors Andie Wolf Leg and Rory Gaudon from Calgary attended the conference in Seattle last year, and Rory was able to go to the one in Scotland in 2013, but they went independently, not as representatives of the paper. The conference organizer even phoned me with concerns about our lack of representation, but concluded that anyone can go to a conference if they are able to pay for the fees and their plane fare.

For me, conferences are an important way to revive my interest in street papers and to network with others who are also publishing street papers. We work in isolation much of the times aside from our connection through the INSP, since each of us in a separate city, and there are only four other street papers in Canada that are members of INSP - in Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Halifax.

Edmonton is the most northern large city in the world so we share the same problems with our homeless freezing on the streets as they do in Russia and the Ukraine.

At street paper conferences that I attended, we always had tours of the places where the homeless hang out and sleep, and of agencies, shel-

ters and other places that provide services to the homeless.

San Francisco's tenderloin area was especially memorable for me, because I stayed at the Coalition for Housing and Homelessness and walked 20 blocks up the tenderloin area to the conference every day, so I met and spoke with many homeless people living on the streets. Homeless people in every city I have visited have always been friendly.

I have seen the low cost housing in Montreal, Chicago and Denver and other cities. I have also found that those of us, who work with street papers, are a lot alike - especially when we got talking about homelessness and vendors.

I went to the conference in Boston as a conference speaker, and facilitated a workshop on vendors and internal policing of vendor behaviour, the summer after the the bombing of the trade towers, and security at the Boston airport was scary. That's the only time I have had my suitcase opened and searched. In Boston we also took an amphibious vehicle to the river, then across the river to a lobster house where we could eat as many lobsters as we wanted.

The Halifax conference in 2004 was very interesting. I got to see the Bluenose 2 in the harbour - a very beautiful ship, and to eat a very good big fish dinner.

Quebec City, with so many French speaking people, really felt like a foreign country.

Now I am looking forward to the conference in Athens, and re-connecting with some of the newspaper editors I met in the past.

Eric - Megaphone vendor of the year - 2015

from the Vancouver street paper - the Megaphone

Congratulations Eric, Vancouver Vendor of the Year 2015! Eric's humble generosity of spirit and dedication to his work do not go unnoticed. He would be the last person to brag, but in his time as a vendor, he has quietly built up an army of customers, fans, and supporters at Megaphone and in the neighbourhood where he works.

Eric cuts a recognizable figure at the busy intersection of 1st and Commercial in Vancouver. After a stint collecting bottles and cans to make ends meet, Eric started selling Hope in Shadows in 2010, and

picked up with Megaphone soon after. Since then, we regularly hear from customers who let us know how much they appreciate his presence. Eric has talked about how valuable the community he found through working as a vendor is to him, but he might not realize how valuable he is to it.

Eric is an active community member and has contributed a lot to Megaphone and Hope in Shadows-- from providing valuable input on big organizational questions, to being one of the most consistent vendors out there work-

ing rain or shine, to serving as a Community Judge for the Hope in Shadows photo contest this year. Despite the challenges that homelessness and poverty have presented in his life, Eric's thoughtfulness, work ethic, and great sense of humour are the enduring qualities that shine through when you speak with him.

We're thrilled to honour Eric as the 2015 Vancouver Vendor of the Year to recognize his outstanding contributions to the Megaphone community, and the wider community in Vancouver.

People and places to avoid

By Joanne Bengier

1. Avoid Bill (not his real name) for reasons it is not polite to state.
2. Nudge, nudge, wink, wink. Cross the street and keep on walking to avoid trouble with this one.
3. Give the axe to all exes.
4. Avoid funerals unless you just go for the free lunch.
5. Avoid rehab and hospitals unless you are an employee.
6. It's prudent not to go into any bank on National Bank Robbery Day.
7. The wise don't board a plane that is going to be hijacked.
8. Avoid all buildings that look like retirement homes for mice.
9. Stay out of CENSORED to avoid being caught up in a police raid.
10. Avoid riding in the back of ambulances and hearses if you can.
11. Stay away from whatchumaycallem for reasons best known to you.
12. Avoid driving on thin ice in late spring and early fall.
13. Stay out of public waiting rooms during flu season.
14. Don't enter an elevator if you see two men with guns quarrelling inside.
15. Always avoid going to Deleted because you know why.
16. Avoid going to OOPS, I almost named the establishment. That could result in a long costly lawsuit.
17. Beware of men who wear animal hats and red pants. Sorry I didn't mean you or him or the other guy.
18. To stay out of trouble avoid me. I'm not always polite. It is legal to admit it.

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Instructors: Linda Dumont and Shaun Giroux - \$1,100 plus Gst Register by April 1st
To register call Shaun at 780-433-4853 or email Linda at dumontlc@hotmail.com

A tale of two paycheques

By Timothy Wild

It must have been a slow news period in early January. Despite the growing tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the troubling increase in family homelessness in Calgary, the Calgary Herald ran an editorial cartoon relating to the proposed, staggered increase in Alberta's minimum wage.

The frame showed three people walking together, and one young woman said "Can you imagine... fifteen dollars an hour!!", to which a young man responded "Not really, I just got laid off...". Now I don't know if the person who lost his job was supposed to be a person laid off from a minimum wage job or if he was one of the many who have lost their jobs in general due to the current crisis of capitalism, but the implication seemed to be that people are becoming unemployed due to the increase in the minimum wage to the still risible amount of \$11.20 per hour.

There are a number of interesting myths, ideological undercurrents and biases informing the message in the cartoon. The first is the fallacy that moderate increases in the minimum wage lead to job loss. Sure, there may be marginal businesses that are so financially strained that they cannot actually pay more. But is the financial survival of a few economically precarious businesses worth the ongoing and grinding impoverishment of members of the working class? The end of slavery had an impact on the economies of the southern States, but, surely, sometimes, just sometimes justice should trump profit? Anyway, even tossing aside notions of justice and inclusion, the evidence suggests that the sky

doesn't fall when the minimum wage goes up.

Secondly, I would assume that the people in the cartoons are teenagers, perpetuating the long-standing myth that the majority of minimum wage earners are younger people, who are working part-time generally for spending money. Yet this is not the case. The vast majority of minimum wage earners are full time employees over the age of 25, and the majority of these are women. For many people, it is not extra pocket money but their main source of income to meet the daily costs of living. And even with an increase to \$15 an hour by 2018, minimum wage does not allow a person, working full-time, to reach even the poverty level.

Now, that is one end of the work-income spectrum. On the other, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recently released a study, written by the economist Hugh Mackenzie, entitled *Staying Power, CEO Pay in Canada*. The report outlined the astounding income inequality between the highest earning CEOs and the average worker. Mackenzie noted that the average annual pay and benefits for each of Canada's top 100 CEOs was almost \$9 million. This was compared to the average annual wage of a Canadian worker of about \$49 000.

According to Mackenzie the top executives earned 184 times the average salary of Canadian workers. To put it into context, he calculated that the top CEOs earned the annual income of the Canadian worker by 12:18 pm on January 4. He also demonstrated that they reached the annual income of the full-time minimum wage earner by

the early afternoon of January 1.

Quite the contrast! And even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recognized that fact that extreme income and wealth inequality is generally a bad thing for economies and societies. Maybe we need maximum wages rather than minimum wages?

But what's the link? I suppose a lot of it comes down to the question of what role jobs should play in terms of supporting a decent quality of life. The right wing, for example, has always placed considerable emphasis on "getting a job" as the panacea for both poverty and financial insecurity. People on the social and economic margins were told that if only they worked harder, or obtained more education, they too could float effortlessly into the ether occupied by the middle class.

Obviously, there are a lot of flaws in this simplistic argument. There are numerous individual and structural barriers that limit some people's ongoing workforce participation. But, I must admit, there is also a significant amount of truth to the centrality of well paying, safe and secure jobs in creating more life opportunities. While they are certainly not the only mechanism to support the extension of social inclusion and economic participation, good jobs do play a key role.

Yes, jobs have to be supplemented by a comprehensive social policy framework and augmented by income replacement programs when people cannot work in either the short- or long-term. They also need to be considered within the boundaries of a robust, interventionist economic approach.

continued on page 23

Looking back at the influences in my life

By John Zapantis

Have you ever been strongly inspired by someone or others close to you to want to reach the unreachable dream like I have.

Well there are three woman I can count on one hand, who've helped inspire me to reach the unreachable!

First my mother, Emmy Zapantis, whose always believed in my efforts to succeed in whatever I've pursued in life.

My wonderful girlfriend Theresa Walsh Cooke, who with her wisdom and winning formula has always suggested that I always be myself and believe that all the cards will fall in place, when keeping a positive attitude.

Finally, Alberta Street News Founder and Editor Linda Dumont, whose compassionate act of kindness opened the door for a number of street newspaper vendors, whose local street-newspaper, Calgary Street Talk, had lost its funding and had been dropped by a social agency called Calgary Urban Project Society (C.U.P.S.).

This unfortunate tragedy of a street paper losing its funding forced some of its street newspaper vendors to contact our editor, after they lost their paper back in August of 2010. Some of those vendors, such as Robert Champion and Andie Wolf Leg, were immediately acknowledged by our Alberta Street News editor Linda Dumont, who sympathized with

their plight. To overcome this disaster, she had newspapers sent to them on a monthly basis.

For a while, these vendors were selling our paper under the old name, Edmonton Street News, while vending our paper on the various street corners of Calgary. To make the paper easier for them to sell that soon changed.

In 2012, our editor decided to change the name of the paper to represent all of Alberta not just Edmonton. On January 3, 2012, our paper hosted an event to celebrate the name change to Alberta Street News.

One month prior to the starting of that event, Linda Dumont asked me if I'd be interested in coming down to that historical celebration. I not only immediately agreed to come down to celebrate the event but came up with the creative idea of volunteering to write and send e-mailed letters to various members of the media to invite them to celebrate this milestone.

My spiritual belief in the good Lord, really paid off in that prayer, for it was answered and with that hard earned effort in writing and sending out those letters to various members of the media, a number of television and local community newspaper publications replied to my letters and covered this name change to the new name - Alberta Street News.

The following Edmonton television networks came - C.T.V.,

C.B.C, and their Calgary sister stations C.T.V. Calgary and C.B.C. Calgary, Edmonton's, CITY TV, Global, People's Aboriginal Television Network . Newspapers that sent reporters included Alberta Sweet Grass and the Boyle McCauley News for a total of nine media outlets out of 16 letters that I had invited.

My efforts in making that all happen really paid off, for our editor, Calgary vendor Andie Wolf Leg and myself, who were all interviewed by various media reporters on hand.

The next week, I went over to Linda's residence to drop off my memory card for a future story that would appear in the next month's issue of Alberta Street News.

It was there in her kitchen, after letting me into her house that she looked at me with a beaming smile of determination and pointed her finger at me and said, "From now on, you're in charge of Public Relations."

Well you can imagine what that did for my self-esteem, not only did I full-fill my duties as a PR Guy for Alberta Street News, but I also created a new occupational title that would serve quite fitting for the position - A.S.N. Media Relations Coordinator.

My duties included writing and sending future letters to the media, informing them of future media events.

Tale of Two psychecques

But jobs are still important and provide implementation of social, economic and cultural rights of citizenship. Workers are worthy of their hire, and should be paid a decent wage, with benefits, security and safety.

Happy Valentine's Day!!



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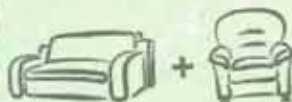
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