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PER PAPER

# ALBERTA Street News

Volume 13

Issue 5

May, 2016



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# Get that book written



**By Linda Dumont**

Do you have a novel or biography you have been trying to get into print for years, but it just seems too big a job - too many pages, too many hours, too much time. That was Sharon Spencer's problem - she had a book in her head that she felt impelled to write, but getting down to doing it seemed just too big an undertaking. She struggled with it for 15 years. Then I suggested that she send one chapter a month to Alberta Street News to be published as a serialized story. Anyone can

write a chapter in a month! Over the next three years, she dutifully sent in those chapters, which I edited for grammar and spelling. Finally the whole book had taken shape! She then self published 500 copies.

Alberta Street News is limited in size with 16 to 24 pages for each issue, so I can't publish a lot of serialized stories, BUT if you want your life story told, or have that mystery story in your head, I am adding a new feature to our web site - a writers' section. We have unlimited space, so can accept chapters from more than one writer - just send in your chapter each month and it will be edited and published on the web page. If the content is found to be unacceptable due to subject matter or language, I will speak with you on how to make it acceptable. Once the book is complete, I will place all the edited chapters on a memory stick for you to take to the publisher or put on Amazon.

I plan to be one of the writers on that page, so you can look forward to reading the whole creative non fiction version of my story, which, like Sharon's story, has been in bits and pieces, for years.

Within the next few months, Angelique Branston will be competing her book of poetry that will be available through Alberta street News vendors.

## Black

**By Angelique Branston**

Black was the heart that deceived me,  
And dark was the night I fell.  
And now as I stand here with the Light,  
Warmly welcoming  
I cannot feel it.  
I cannot feel this warmth, that surrounds me, envelopes me.  
Nor can I accept that this is mine to enjoy . . .  
No, not I.  
Not this wretched soul -  
The tormentors flock around me  
Blocking the blessed light from my sight.  
I feel them  
Their hate filled eyes bore into me  
Showing me every weakness, every flaw.  
Their touch is colder than ice,  
Their talons sharp as razors.  
All I see is darkness.  
Black.

## ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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**Deadline for June issue - May 15, 2016**

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

# What I Have Learned

## From the Homeless, Down and Out, and Marginalized

By Sam Geortz

April 11th, 2016, approximately 5:25 p.m.: I'm riding the LRT to Churchill station for rehearsal at the Citadel. I open up my Metro newspaper and I read the five words that made me angrier than anything else in my life; "Alberta Street News may close". Upon reading that, a righteous rage unlike anything I have ever felt before took hold of me, I could barely contain my desperate outrage. The Alberta Street news can't close down, it can't and it won't, I told myself. Upon arriving at my destination and thusly receiving telephone service, I went into a fervorous frenzy of research and attempts to reach the woman who makes this possible: Linda Dumont. I phoned everyone I could and emailed all I could in attempts to track her down. I vowed to myself that the Alberta Street News would never die so long as I don't.

The Alberta Street News has given the disenfranchised, the marginalized, the beaten down of society, a breath of chance. It's a chance to pay the bills for them, it's a chance to see a movie or buy a present for their loved ones, it's what allows some to lead a better life, simply put. These are people taking chances on themselves, taking risks, and becoming a member of a larger community.

Above all else it is the people who comprise and use ASN that made me feel so strongly and passionately. These people have forever changed my life and allowed me the empathy and real-life education that make me the man I am today.

I can recall the face of every Street News vendor I have ever been acquainted with. I recall Vic, the vendor for the Old Strathcona Chapters corner, whom I saw many-a-time over the years. Vic always had a kind word to say when my Mother and I would walk past, and even at the ripe age of 9 years old, lessons of compassion and empathy were becoming ingrained in me.

My mother always made it clear that these people were not lesser because of their socioeconomic position, but they were our friends, with unique stories, talents, and gifts for the world. I'm fortunate to have grown up in a household that taught me these lessons.

The three biggest lessons I have learned from the poorer in society: compassion, humility, and appreciation. Those three virtues are among the most valuable a human being can hope to have, and the ones that the disenfranchised carry with them in spades.

**Compassion.** When you experienced the deepest pains of life as many of these folks have, you learn to empathize with others on a whole new wavelength. I've heard some heart-wrenching stories, of experiences I hope that I never have to deal with. I hear how people struggle for so long, and how they fight every day against addictions, inveterate prejudice, and for survival. These people aren't that different from me; the only thing separating us is fortune or a lack of it. I've learned how to understand hardship on an entirely new level, because it isn't these people's faults that they are here, so the onus can't be entirely on them to work out of it.

Upon talking and laughing with them I have come to the blaringly obvious conclusion that they are just as deserving of love and affirmation as more well-off folks, in fact, more-so. They deserve our kindness and our time, because their fight is our fight. Were it not for the lottery of birth we would be in their shoes. It's time to start seeing people for what they are, not where they are. The highlights of my week are often the laughs I get to share with these strangers on the streets, to talk about relationships and troubles or to reminisce about the Oilers glory days (though I wasn't alive until well after).

**Humility.** When you realize that

the primary reason you aren't in a homeless person's shoes is luck, you gain a humility that only perspective can grant. It takes a lot of hard work and skill to attain great success, but it also helps to be born into a comfortable living situation, and realizing the difference brings a whole new level of empathy. It's hard to be too full of one's self when you see your fellow citizen on the street struggling to get food, and realizing that it isn't a rightful condemnation of them that has led them there, but the fortune of lives. I am no better than the poorest person in Edmonton. If they grew up in my circumstances, they would be living prosperously too.

**Appreciation.** The third of the connected great lessons I have learned from homeless people. I work at the farmer's market, and every week I have the fortune of interacting with some of the vendors of this newspaper, often times they just need to change out some coins. After a lifetime of implicit or explicit ill-founded prejudice, it's amazing the appreciation some vendors have for simply changing out some coins for cash. They see that someone, on a microscopic level is doing something to help them out, and they show their gratitude freely.

I try to learn this value every day; that no matter how small the act, kindness is kindness, and we should appreciate it. Looking at the world with this lens, I can see kindness and compassion almost everywhere. There are good deeds being done by people left, right, and centre, in shops and on the streets.

I've learned from my interactions with the homeless folks in Edmonton that no one is superior to any other, that compassion is afforded to all, and that good deeds are always there for the appreciating. I am a rich man for having known these people, and my life is forever changed because of it.



An appreciation

# Impressive Indigenous artists group exhibition at Art Gallery of Alberta



By Allan Sheppard

**Original Group of Seven explored and celebrated Canadian landscapes: "Indian" Group of Seven explore and celebrate Indigenous mythology and spirituality**

**7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.**

**Art Gallery of Alberta**

**2 Sir Winston Churchill Square,  
Edmonton AB**

**Organized by Mackenzie Art Gallery (Regina)**

**Continuing to 3 July 2016**

With desperately sad news again cascading out of Attawapiskat (and other less prominent Indigenous communities across the country) it's tempting to join the chorus of opinion, pontification, and bloviation by offering my own observations and suggestions. But I've done that often enough in these pages and, given the inevitable futility of most such gratuitous advice and wringing of hands, I can be sure of having more temptations and opportunities to comment to

in the future. Better to leave room now for those who have knowledge and experience of such things to speak and be heard.

Instead, I will celebrate an aspect of Indigenous life and culture in Canada that I was, like I assume most Canadians, only dimly aware of (if at all) until I stumbled across it a few days ago: Indigenous art and the efforts of seven First Nations artists to assert its existence, value, and aesthetics at a time when Indigenous art was routinely dismissed as merely decorative—more craft than art, unworthy of space on the walls of mainstream commercial and public galleries.

The current exhibition at the Art Gallery of Alberta (AGA) of works by members of the Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated (PNIAI) clearly and forcefully demonstrates that artists rooted in Indigenous traditions can be and are a force to be respected by the art world in Canada and beyond. Sadly, the exhibition underlines how overlooked the best of them have been, even as it highlights their claim to recognition.

Formed in the early 1970s and closely allied for little about a decade, the PNIAI comprised Jackson Beard (1944-1984), Eddy Coziness (1933-1996), Alex Javier (b. 1935), Normal Morrison (1932-2007), Daphne Jigged (b. 1919), Carl Ray (1942-1978) and Joseph Sanchez (b. 1948). They came to be known informally as the Indian Group of Seven. Perhaps that was inevitable, due to their number and the possible marketing cachet of

likening them to the more prominent Group of Seven Canadian landscape artists that had formed around A.Y. Jackson fifty years earlier. But if they were alike in their number and in their desire to assert personal and cultural validity as artists, the art they pursued was much different in character, content, and aspiration.

The formal name the group's members chose for themselves, Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated (PNIAI), more accurately and fairly reflects their goals and ultimate achievements: while, like the Canadian Group of Seven, they wanted to find room for themselves and their own artistic sensibilities in an art world dominated by European and European-derived standards and precedents, they were neither followers nor imitators. They wanted to be able to do their own thing in their own several ways, and they demanded recognition as legitimate, professional artists, aware of and sensitive to universal aesthetics, without having to deny or alienate themselves from traditional aesthetics they had grown up with.

Like the members of the original Group of Seven, each had distinct and distinctive visions and values; but where the Canadian Group of Seven found inspiration and cause for celebration in the land and in Canada's physical landscape, members of the PNIAI explored and were inspired by interior landscapes of the spirit and cultural memories that were as varied as the First Nations they

they were born into.

My encounter with their work in a large group exhibition called 7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. was serendipitous. Having been given complimentary passes, I skimmed the Art Gallery of Alberta web site and arrived at the AGA expecting to see yet another exhibition by Jackson, Lauren Harris, Frederick Valery et al: the ubiquitous Canadian Group of Seven and their friends. To my surprise and eventual delight, I found I had stumbled upon a collection of 80 varied and original works that, taken together, showcased a reality that I had missed in occasional viewings of the few individual works of which I was aware by the most prominent members of the Indigenous seven: Cold Lake, Alberta-based Alex Janvier, the late Norval Morrisseau, and the only woman in the group, Daphne Odjig, who is perhaps best known for her illustrations in *Tales from the Smokehouse*, a rare but highly valued collection of Indigenous erotic tales by Herbert T. Schwartz.

Viewed separately on location (there are Janvier murals in and around Edmonton), occasionally in galleries, and in art books and on line, the group's works seemed to me primarily exercises in design, composition, line, and colour typical of much modern and contemporary art, though without the emotional content of much of it.

"Don't show me what you see (or think); show me what you feel," has become a kind of mantra for many art teachers—and a good one it is, for an aesthetic that respects individuals and individual experiences above other values—but this exhibition makes it clear that Indigenous artists (at least those in the PNIAI) march (or make art) to a different drummer. Taken together in all the scope and variety on view in the exhibition, these seven art-

ists reveal themselves first of all as storytellers: they tell stories, drawn mostly from traditional, communal memory, passed from generation to generation orally and, probably for the first time in many cases fixed permanently on canvas by members of the group.

The artists in the exhibition are not illiterate—far from it—but collectively they leave no doubt that they arose out of an oral tradition, with roots planted deep in story and myth, often spiritual in content, but also historical. I didn't plan to review the exhibition, so I didn't have note-taking materials material. But I remember Thunderbirds and their traditional adversaries, serpents, rendered in a variety of ways and contexts. Also fishes and, to a lesser extent, birds. And water; more water than land and landscape. One painting recalls to events at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890 and (on a much smaller and modest scale) Pablo Picasso's epic protest against the Spanish Civil War atrocity at Guernica, just before the Second World War.

The stories that inspire and inform their work and iconography would have been familiar to members of the varied communities from which they are drawn and to which they, in the first place, were addressed. Or at least they should have been, would have been, had it not been for widespread consequences of covert colonization and overt deracination that had been going on in our home on native land for more than a century before the PNIAI came together.

The groups goal's seem to have been as much personal as cultural, but cultural revival had to have been a consequence of their work and achievements (whatever their individual intentions) given losses their communities and cultural tradi-

tions had sustained by the time they started their work and given the substance and permanence their works gave to traditions and stories that had been decimated and remained (still remain) at significant risk. The examples they set and the standards they achieved live on for the artists who have and will continue after them.

Some of us like to think that art has healing power, and we might like to believe that the work of PNIAI members and their artistic descendants has worked healing miracles within their communities and will continue to do so. Perhaps. But inclinations and time to appreciate art can be in short supply in distressed communities. We know that members of the group shared the personal burdens of many members of Indigenous communities. Three of them—Beardy, Cobiness, and Ray—died young. Norval Morrisseau, though he lived a reasonably long and very productive artistic life, fought a long battle with alcoholism and health issues, even living for a time homeless on Vancouver's Lower East Side. On the other hand, Alex Janvier remains active and creative into his 80s; Daphne Odjig, now in her 90s, remains an inspiration to many in her community and beyond.

Whatever its ultimate value and power as a healing agent, art cannot be a magic bullet that enables us and our Indigenous brothers and sisters to transcend our shared history. We cannot avoid the hard job of working through the consequences of the history, step by step with open minds and hearts. 7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. offers a good, enlightening first step on what will surely be a long journey, worth the taking. It will continue at the AGA until 03 July.

Enjoy.

# Define your goal in life

By Linda Roan

What is the most important goal in life? Is it to pursue money and power? Is it to pursue pleasure? This was the philosophy of Freud and Alder, psychoanalysts of the past. A psychotherapist who broke away from this philosophy was a man named Viktor Frankl, a man who survived four concentration camps, including Auschwitz. In 1946 he wrote the book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, a book, which has changed the lives of generation after generation and which continues to change lives of adolescents today.

According to an interview that Viktor Frankl gave in 1972, despair can be explained in terms of a mathematical equation,  $D=S-M$ .

In other words, despair is suffering without meaning. If we see meaning in suffering, it can be molded into an achievement. That is, the freedom to take a stand, to whatever conditions might confront us. If we cannot change the situation, we always have the last freedom to change our attitude to that situation. Instead of thinking, "Because I lost my job, I'll never be employed", think "Although I lost my job, I have many strengths, and have the opportunity to look for a new and more fulfilling job opportunity. One job does not define me." Once you see meaning, you will see it all around you.

Viktor Frankl received a letter from a young man who told how he had an accident that had left

him paralyzed from the neck down. It was written as follows. "I broke my neck, but it did not break me".

The last freedom that we have is the freedom of a decision, in spite of the conditions.

Note: Most of this article is an excerpt from an interview that Viktor Frankl gave, and also excerpts from the book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. The book can be found at Edmonton Public Library, but I warn you, there is a long waiting line-up. I am # 48! I hope that this encourages many to use the freedom we've been given to find meaning, no matter our circumstances.



## No more social housing in five central Edmonton neighbourhoods

The city of Edmonton has voted to extend the moratorium on social housing in five central Edmonton neighbourhoods : Alberta Avenue, Eastwood, Queen Mary Park, Central McDougall and McCauley. This means that social housing projects are not banned outright, but the city will not invest in them. Citizens of the five neighbourhoods had concerns that all of the city's social housing was in their neighbourhoods. The moratorium will remain in effect until new plans are developed, which would not be before the middle of 2017.



# Alberta Street News continues

By Linda Dumont

The past three weeks have been interesting, with calls and emails from media and from individuals concerned about Alberta Street News. It began when the printer called to say the March issue had not been paid and they refused to print the April issue until it was. It concluded with me getting to stand up and be recognized in parliament on Thursday, April 21 at 1:30 p.m., and receiving a round of applause from all the MLAs, for, I think, just being me.

After I spoke with the printer, I called up Dave Martyshuk to find out why the bill was not paid. He reminded me that he had committed to paying the printing costs for six months, and six months had passed since the August issue. I asked him to pay the March issue, and he agreed to do that. Then I

called the printer to pay for the printing of the May issue on my credit card. By printing in black and white, I cut the cost down by \$200.

I wrote up a notice for the vendors to give to their customers, and sent a copy to Paula Kirman, our web page designer. I met with her the next day to pay that bill, and she said she had posted the notice on the web and on Twitter and could send it out to her media contacts. I said OK.

Wednesday, April 6 the reporter from the Examiner emailed, followed by the Journal reporter and Metro. CBC radio, the university radio station and Alberta Prime Time television, who all wanted the story. Then, I started getting emails and contact numbers sent on to me by the reporters and some sponsors who said they

would help to pay the printing costs. City Councillor Michael Walters said he would come up with \$750 a month in advertising.

To date, I have \$500 in sponsorship money towards printing the May issue, and another \$45 from a subscription.

There were also several people who

want to share their ideas on how to make the paper more sustainable. I will be meeting with them next week.

I got a call from the editor of Megaphone, the Vancouver Street Newspaper that is also sold in Victoria since the Victoria paper folded a few years ago. He offered to print Edmonton content in Megaphone, and then send out copies for sale in Edmonton and Calgary. I thanked him, told him we were OK for now, but it is nice to know that option exists. As things are now, too much rests on my being there to edit and design each issue.

One man asked about buying Alberta Street News. I explained that it is a street newspaper, so there is a whole other aspect to the paper - writing and publishing is one side and the employment and management of the vendor work force is a whole other aspect.

As I go to press with the May issue, I want to thank all of the people who rallied around with support during the past three weeks. I was really surprised at the media interest and people's response to the notice that Alberta Street News may have to fold after 12 and a half years. It looks like the paper will be in print for at least another year! That means I can't get a rocking chair and knitting needles and complain about having nothing to do.

It's a good thing. I haven't knitted since I was a teenager working a summer job as a movie projectionist and knitting while watching the reels of film unroll.



Left: Alberta Street News in 2004

# Are We In The Last Days?



## By Sharon Spencer

If you know the word of God you can hardly open a paper or listen to the news without being astounded by the compounded horrors in this world that are fulfillment of the predictions in the Bible. In Matthew 24:3-7 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Jesus answered: *"Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains."*

Catastrophic disasters and disease take place before our very eyes as we are caught in the birthing pains. Just as a woman in labour, her pains increase with intensity just as they draw her closer to the birth, so it is with the coming of Christ. He warned us.

He wanted us to be prepared, which leads to the verse Ps.16:8 "I

*have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."*

Why it is even rumoured that the earth is off it's axis, however, the prophets have been declaring everything that can be shaken will be shaken. But God says the righteous shall not be shaken.

The world groans under the stress of finding solutions for growing problems as countries are displaced and people are in refugee camps overflowing the boundaries of countries that are ill equipped to deal with the tragedy in their lives. The resources are simply not there, the world does not have an answer. When a disaster breaks and aid is received another disaster follows. Governments were never meant to have the answer - only Jesus has the answer. God said the government was upon His shoulders. Just like the old song says, *"This world is not my home, I'm just passing through."*

Oh yes, we're astounded by the changes. Nothing is as it was. You can choose to ignore it but it's impossible. Europe always was a dream to visit, but now it is wracked with terrorism and death. Godless men, who see mainstream people as their enemies, sneak into places which once were safe and kill as many innocents as they can. This is not the world many of us grew up in. Many suffer under the hands of unjust, brainwashed people, deluded by propaganda to see our religion and lifestyle as the enemy to their lives as they long to overtake society by force worldwide.

Nobody saw this coming until 9/11. What a shock! Why even people will change for the worse as said in 2 Timothy 3:1-4 *"But mark*

*this: there will be terrible times in the last day, People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."*

Do you see these traits are very common today as people pursue pleasure more than God? They no longer care if their sin is exposed before the world but wallow in perversions and take great joy in it. Their friends applaud. They chase money that is never enough. Now in Alberta, where people flocked to find safety in our oil industry, the kitty has run dry. People are selling things they worked hard for. When the employment insurance runs out they don't know where to turn.

We are living in interesting times, and the only answer is to come into the safety of Jesus' arms. They are open wide, ready to receive you. He's been waiting for you for so long. The world we once knew is dissolving around us. While Jesus waits patiently for you as He says. John 14:6 "Jesus answered, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

A long time ago I decided I was a sinner and there was no hope of me going to heaven. The only thing I could do was ask Christ to come into my life. I had to open the door and invite him into my life. My home is heaven and my hope is in heaven where my daughter awaits me.



# Three for the money



By Joanne Bengner

## 1. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

I don't think most panhandlers are aware of how much good they do. When my husband of 42 years died unexpectedly in his sleep, I was devastated. People were kind but life was a struggle. I forced myself to eat, sleep, exercise by the clock. One day I was going for my daily walk and feeling sorry for myself when a man asked me for money for a cup of coffee. I gave him coffee money and felt my first real joy as a widow. I remember thinking, "I must still look normal or he wouldn't have asked me for money." And then I thought, "Isn't it wonderful. I can still help

people!" He got a cup of coffee; I got a new lease on life.

## 2. You can never be too rich or too thin.

This has been attributed to the Duchess of Windsor, who was both thin and rich, however this is no longer true. If you are too thin you have anorexia which can be deadly. I should know. I have a granddaughter, who has battled anorexia. She has recovered I am pleased to report.

If you become too rich, you become a one-per center and have to live in a gated community for safety. I read a travel article which advised, "Leave the Rolex at home and wear a Timex." It is no longer safe to be visibly rich. (I don't even own a Timex. My watch came from a dollar store. Across a crowded dimly lit room it might pass for quality. I'm not sure. What does a Rolex look like?

I met a lady who loves flea markets and likes to dicker. She got a cheap old wedding ring and a shabby purse because she wants to look poor to get a better deal. She says sellers focus on your hands and your purse. I heard of a man who was dressed down casual when someone remarked on his designer jeans and t-shirt. He said, "Oh, they

belong to the husband of the lady I work for."

In these times people who have slaved away so they could have all the status symbols now find it best to pass for poor.

## 2. Better late than never

When Uncle John died in 1992 at the age of 87 his possessions were divided up and among other things I got a gaudy wallet in some sort of tortoise shell design. I imagine he got it one Christmas and I enjoyed showing it to friends as proof that even in the 1940's people gave tasteless Christmas presents. Uncle John was a quiet dignified man with good taste and never used it.

This year with animal prints all the rage, I decided its time had come. The zipper still worked and the ID card had never been filled in. I removed the ID card to find a George VI five dollar bill had been folded and tucked behind it. It was obvious that whomever gave the tasteless wallet to Uncle John had only used it as a vehicle for the real gift – five dollars, which would have bought a lot in the '40s. It was probably a gift from Auntie Annette, who shared my roughish sense of humour

### Novena

#### Pray to the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit, You who solve all problems, light all roads so that I can attain my goal. You give me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances of my life you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things as you confirm once again that I never wanted to be separated from you even and in spite of all material illusions. I wish to be with you in eternal glory.. Thank you for your mercy towards me and mine.

The person must say this prayer for three consecutive days. After three days this favour requested will be granted even if it may appear difficult. This prayer must be published immediately after the prayer is granted without mentioning the favour. Only your initials shall appear at the bottom. J.B.

# Goodbye My Friend



## Story and photo by Sharon Austin

With the warmer days of spring I could hear the peeper frogs singing from the creek in the evening. I heard the welcome honk of the wild geese nesting by the river and saw the bright spring birds descend upon my feeders, yet still, I hesitated. With the soft shoots of green grass springing up and tiny yellow colts foot dotting the roadside I told myself that it was time to resume my walks along the river. You see, I had lost my dearest friend, who had always walked with me there for sixteen years; Cujo, my beautiful long-haired Chihuahua terrier mix. As I walked I could almost see him running full speed across the gravel dam, his plume of a tail held high like a banner above him. I saw the shallow sandy beach where he had proudly retrieved the tiny sticks that I would throw for him. He was always with me, either in my arms or on my lap, walking beside me, riding in my car, or sleeping on my pillow. Cujo was only seven pounds and barely three apples tall but he had the heart of a lion. He knew he was special and he was the boss of our big dog and all the cats. Cujo knew no fear and he even wanted to chase the huge black bear that came nosing around the yard in the spring. He was the perfect friend; he had no axes to grind, no bitterness, no boasts to make, no grudges to hold. Instead he was always so happy just to be with me, always loyal, and offered his unconditional love.

Like all of us, Cujo had his brush with death and his health problems. Once when we were walking by the river my big dog, who had run ahead, began barking

## Help to keep *Alberta Street News* in print

### Here's How:

#### 1. Place an ad in ASN

Ad Rates: Full page- \$600

Three quarter page - \$450

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Business card - \$50

You will receive a receipt that can be used as a business expense.

Send ads in PDF form, or we can design your ad for you.

#### 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



## Yoga Instructors Training

Weekends November 4 to December 5, 2016

Instructors:

Linda Dumont and Shaun Giroux

\$1,200 plus GST

To register call Shaun at 780-433-4853 or  
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### Yoga Books available:

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Gentle Yoga Using a Chair - \$15

at a big rock on the gravel bank. I figured that she was probably barking at a grass snake or a frog so I was not concerned when Cujo ran to join her. Suddenly, to my horror, the rock moved and I realized that it was a huge grey turtle with a shell a foot and a half across laying her eggs in the gravel. She did not want to be disturbed and I saw her long neck strike out toward my big dog, Sheena. I ran as fast as I could, but before I could swoop Cujo to safety she struck again and Cujo leaped back yelping in pain. As if in slow motion, I saw her huge mouth open baring her terrible sharp teeth and the blood spurting from Cujo's nose. I grabbed him and wiped his bloodied face with my shirt to see if he still had his little black nose. Thankfully, the turtle had only gashed his nose and the vet said he didn't even need a stitch. He did need a shot of antibiotics, though, because turtle bites can cause bad infections.

One weakness that is common to Chihuahuas is dental problems and Cujo only had six teeth left but

he could still wolf down his favourite treat of roast beef.

I never really noticed Cujo getting old but then we were both declining, he with old age and I with a progressive autoimmune disease. We walked less, we rested more, and we were content to sit and listen to the soft roar of the ocean waves at the beach. Once we had run with sweet abandon across the wet sand and searched the shore for shells. He had always come home with sand fleas and needed a bath which he hated. It was only when the vet called him a senior dog or when someone in town would say, "Your dog must be awfully old," that I would really look at him. Then I could see that his lovely red fur had all gone white around his face and his eyes did look a bit sunken. Also, his lack of teeth made his tongue loll out to the side sometimes giving him a saucy look. But, most of the time I saw Cujo with the eyes of love and I saw only his bright joyful spirit and his happy presence that could fill a room.

I was with Cujo when he died

from a seizure; his beautiful eyes never left my face as he slipped away with quiet grace. I cut a little lock of his red fur and tied it with thin purple ribbon to put away with my special treasures. About a week later I went to Tim's for coffee and I saw the friendly little pan-handler standing in his usual place. He always came over to pat my big dog who rides in the passenger seat and to make a fuss over Cujo.

"Where's your little buddy." he questioned. When I told him, his faded blue eyes filled with tears.

"I'm so sorry," he said. "I had a dog once," he continued, "A corgi - he was like my son. I lost him when he was fourteen." A tear trailed down the wrinkle on his weathered cheek. "Why do we do it to ourselves," he questioned. "We know they can't last....they don't live long enough."

"We do it for the joy they bring us," I said, "and for the memories." Looking at the little old pan-handler, I realized that we were kindred spirits for we had both been blessed with the pure unconditional love of a wonderful dog.

## Thank you !

By Angelique Branston

I wanted to thank everyone who has shown their support for the Alberta Street News. That it will continue on means so much not just to me and my family but to all the other vendors, and our regular supporters and friends. For me loss of the paper would have meant not just a loss of income, but also the loss of a community that would be sorely missed. I was amazed when I heard about the phone calls of promised supporters who wish to remain anonymous. All of my friends at the Strathcona Farmers' Market, and people I have never seen before in my life approached me with words of encouragement and support. It is easy at times to begin to feel as though you are alone in the world but this last month was affirmation that we are not alone. Thank you.

## No Increase in AISH rates

By Linda Dumont

There was no increase in the rates for Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) in the provincial budget. The last time AISH rates were increased was in 2012 when they were raised \$400 to \$1,588 a month.

About 20,000 Edmontonians with a permanent disability that limits their ability to earn a living, are living on AISH. Advocates have been saying for a long time that AISH rates should be tied in with the cost of living and raised as the cost of living increases.

"It's already limited to begin with so we get increasing risk and vulnerability the longer the government waits to increase AISH," said Brian Uditsky, CEO of Inclusion Alberta. "Costs go up but your income won't."



# HEALING WORDS



**BY THE CMHA  
WRITING FOR RECOVERY GROUP**



James Gordon Irving

## Just Standing

By Lanky

Standing.  
Wind blowing lightly.  
Behind the building. Little birds chirping.  
The warmth of the morning sun at my back.  
Not the Chickadee's, not the Thrush's.  
A new chirping. Different but familiar.  
In that direction I look.  
Up to a tree.  
And not a Magpie or Crow or Raven I see.  
Not far from me. A Blue Jay talked.  
I looked.  
We looked. He said no more.  
I ignore him a short while.  
Turning my back.  
Shuffling my feet on the concrete, smiling.  
He speaks again. I look.  
I glance. I show my smile. I ignore.  
Then I turn with a long look, long time, with smiling  
eye's.  
As the Blue Jay twists his head this and that way.  
Looking.  
For February 25th that's pretty good to see.  
Blue Jay in a tree.  
My smoke is almost done.  
The little one's keep buzzing me.  
Just over me my head in reach.  
They like me I guess.  
They do it since I live here.  
Circling for another round over my  
imposing mass.  
Of gentleness..  
Looking eyeball to eyeball they see.  
I know they see eye to eye from there.  
Then I see only in their direction.  
I see only their form.  
It is friendly, it is fun.  
The wild seemingly entertaining me.  
My key fob against the door. I leave my friends.  
No worry.  
I'll see them out my window again.

HEALING  
WORDS

# Pantoum Poetry

By Michelle Black

## A Walk in The Park

The sun shines brightly  
Rays of light touching the  
branches

Pigeons cooing  
Children laughing

Rays of light touching the  
branches  
Green grass surrounds me  
Children laughing  
Not a cloud in the sky

Green grass surrounds me  
Pigeons cooing  
Not a cloud in the sky  
The sun shines brightly

## A Day for Haikus

A towel lay on the brick  
Bird chirping beneath a long  
black fence  
Nest up high in tree  
Magpie flies by so swiftly

Bird chirping beneath a long  
black fence  
Sun shines brightly, no clouds in  
the sky  
Magpie flies by so swiftly  
A shadow of a bar fence

Sun shines brightly, no clouds in  
the sky  
Nest up high in tree  
A shadow of a bar fence  
A towel lay on the brick

## The Little Boy

By Gily Ro

The little boy wore orange and  
black  
He brought smiles where there  
was a lack  
Hi mother was strong and fair  
She kept him clean and trimmed  
his hair

He brought smiles where there  
was a lack  
Reception left their desks, but  
would get no flack  
She kept him clean and trimmed  
his hair  
Bringing happiness without a care

Reception left their desks, but  
would get no flack  
His mother was strong and fair  
Bringing happiness without a care  
The little boy wore orange and  
black

# Their Story

## Alberta Street News vendor Peter Gladue



By Linda Dumont

Peter has been selling Alberta street News since 2011, working on Jasper Avenue and 101 Street by Starbucks and at the Strathcona Farmers' Market on Saturdays, and

now in Vegreville.

"I love it – I'm my own boss. People are very friendly – they bring me little treats and stuff, they bring me cups of coffee, and shake my hand, especially on Jasper Avenue," said Peter, "They ask how I'm doing."

"I'm doing OK. Still alive, still selling papers. I love what I do."

Peter was born in Edmonton in 1978 and lived in Edmonton until recently when he moved to Vegreville, Alberta. He attended St Nickolos School and completed his Grade Eleven. He became a father and raised his 19 year old daughter,

Summer.

Peter has worked in a bottle depot and did landscaping. In 1998 he was in a car accident so he has an injured back and steel pins in his knees. Since then he has been on medical welfare, but he has now applied for Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) benefits. Once he gets AISH, he plans to find housing, most likely in Edmonton. He has applied with the Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre and with the Boyle Street Community Services for housing.

# 36th year for Outdoor Way of the Cross



## Story and photos

By Linda Dumont

About 1000 people gathered for the 36th Annual Outdoor Way of the Cross on Good Friday. The theme was Transformation: Ourselves and Our World. There were seven stations including the George Spady Centre, Immigration Hall, Mary Burlie Park, the Bissell Centre, The Mustard Seed, Ambrose Place and Hope Mission, with a reading and prayer at each station. The walk ended with a litany of commitment followed by a lunch of chilli and salad served at Hope Mission.

## Litany of commitment

As people in the streets, we have demonstrated this morning it is important to care for our common home. We accept the task to turn from values that destroy a future for too many through the culture of death and injustice.

We embrace the truth that the power of the Gospel and the Spirit can transform us to faithful helpful citizens for this common home. We confess our part in allowing a world where too many are exclud-

ed from fairness and left in need and pain.

We affirm Jesus' call to be those who proclaim in solidarity the good news of a power that can transform. We commit to the gospel ecology that does not separate human well being and justice from the care of the whole environment.

We celebrate a Gospel that brings healing as we commit to actions to ensure a sustainable future for every living being. We proclaim the reality of transformation, of new birth into a life of commitment to end poverty, hunger, discrimination, violence, selfish focus and the pursuit of short term appetites.

We recognize this is a journey where the voices of the weakest and most marginalized must be given preference as we make choices, where the grip of power and wealth must be continuously challenged. Poverty, prison and oppression come in many forms Jesus calls for freedom, release, and recovery for each one from any of its forms. We will be the hands and feet and voices for this bringing of the lord's favour, this righting of deep wrongs.

## My Reflection

I was walking along near the front of the crowd so I could take photos at each of the stations, when we passed a homeless man standing on the grass next to the sidewalk with his loaded shopping cart.

I stopped to say hello, and he asked if I knew anywhere he could get a free meal. I didn't. Good Friday was a statutory holiday. He said he was on dialysis for kidney failure, and was feeling weak and hungry.

He then asked if I had any money. I looked through my wallet and found only my bank card and a couple of credit cards but no cash. I scanned the crowd looking for help. Surely someone out there had some cash, but all the people were just walking past, oblivious to us, until I spotted Pastor Rick from the Inner City Pastoral Ministry walking with a friend.

They stopped, and I asked if they had any change. Rick's friend immediately emptied his pockets and came up with a few coins. I handed them to the man, and asked if I could pray for him. He consented, so I said a quick prayer that God would supply his need.

Before he walked on, Pastor Rick reached out to shake hands. He placed a \$20 bill in my palm. My eyes filled with tears as I handed it to the homeless man.

I rejoined the march this time near the end of the line.



# Opening Reflection at the George Spady Centre

By Linda Winski (Planning Committee)

Good morning all. I welcome you to this annual prayer walk.

Having been a participant for close to 30 years, I know that this walk is a significant Good Friday tradition for many people in our community.

I am also aware that there are many individuals who are no longer able to participate; and so I ask that if you know anyone who falls into that category, please keep them in your heart's awareness throughout the walk as a way of having them here.

Our theme this year is Transformation: Our Selves and Our World.

The theme was inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals officially adopted by the United Nations at a summit in New York on Sept 25 of 2015. At that gathering, over 190 world leaders committed to an agenda that provides a vision for the next 15 years... a vision for people, planet and prosperity. The agenda articulates 17 goals, and 169 targets and is the result of two years of consultation and engagement involving 193 UN member states and unprecedented participation of civil society and other stakeholders including the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable people.

Generally speaking, the goals and targets are designed to achieve 3 things in the next 15 years:

1. End extreme poverty;
2. fight inequality & injustice,
3. and fix climate change.

The vision articulated in this initiative is a vision that calls for the universal engagement of all people the world over as it seeks a world where no one will be left behind and ALL can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives.

The agenda is ambitious, the goals are lofty and some may say they are just more words on paper. Yet, one only needs to watch the news reports of what is happening around the world to realize that things aren't improving for millions of our sisters and brothers around the world let alone the planet. What we are doing isn't working and to continue on our current path will lead to our destruction.

We need a new path and that is what these goals offer. In the preamble to the SDG, signed by 193 countries, it states: "We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path." I find that hopeful.

Each nation is encouraged to do what it can within its means to move forward, fully realizing that the full achievement of these goals will require both the transformation of individual hearts and transformation of the systems and structures that govern the very way we live and do things together as a global community intimately connected to one another and the earth. Such a transformation cannot happen alone, It must be done together.

As in past years, we anchor our theme in a scripture passage. This year we chose Luke 4: wherein Jesus proclaims his mission and ministry with the words: God sent me to bring

good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind and to set the downtrodden free..." This passage provides a mirror for us to hold up to our own lives, attitudes, values and perhaps discover room for personal transformation.

It also provides a roadmap, a vision, a path for us to move forward as a society for we all have heard that the measure of justice in a society is based on how we treat the poor

It is for us to take up this mission as well... The Spirit is upon US to proclaim and be good news in our time ...as we work together to achieve a world where ALL have the opportunity to develop the fullness of their potential, created in the image and likeness of the creator... And that the integrity of creation is upheld.

Each of the stations today will offer a reflection on one or two of the Sustainable Development Goals.



# Changing our attitudes will bring more peace in our lives



By Maria B.

*"To believe in something, and not to live it, is dishonest."*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

There are three steps to change our attitude:

- Our beliefs about ourselves are the guiders of our thoughts, words and actions.
- Our thoughts are very important as they influence our words and actions.
- Our words are results of our thoughts. Our actions are the results of what we believe, what we think, and the results are our actions.

If we perceive the world as a hostile place, it will directly influence our beliefs.

Our words and how we treat ourselves and others reflect in our actions. Whatever we believe affects our actions. If we believe that a certain action is negative, we will reply in a negative form. If, on the other hand, we believe an action to be positive, then our actions will be positive.

Taking action (or not taking action), gives you results of one sort

or another. If you evaluate your results and you don't like what you find, or if you want different results or better results, it circles right back around to what you believe.

So what do you believe? And are your beliefs standing in your way? Do your beliefs support your ability to prospect successfully? If they do not, it's time to change your beliefs.

*"Faith is about doing. You are how you act, not just how you believe."*

*Mitch Albom*

Words have such power. They can hurt our feelings or encourage us, they can uplift us or depress us, they can shape us or break us. As children, the words that were spoken to us have become a part of us. They are planted in our subconscious and we replay them over and over in our mind.

Most of us grew up with negative messages that continue to run through our minds and they continue to affect our decisions in life.

*"What have I always believed? That on the whole, and by and large, if a man lived properly, not according to what any priests said, but according to what seemed decent and honest inside, then it would, at the end, more or less, turn out all right."*

*Terry Pratchett*

The best way to change our beliefs is to sit down and write down all the beliefs that come from your parents or the people that raised you. Question every belief that you have been told that you are. Make an honest observation of who you are and the ones that conform to the beliefs you think are closer to

yours. While you are going through this, I want you to understand that when you were born you had everything within you that you need to succeed in life.

WE WERE BORN AS GIFTS TO THE WORLD, WE NEVER ASKED TO BE CONCEIVED OR TO BE BORN, THIS DECISION WAS MADE FOR US.

Every child is an incredible human being that deserves to be respected and treated with respect. I learned that in life we teach others how to treat us and if we do not have a very good image of ourselves we are going to become the welcome mats for people to abuse us.

When I was growing up I always felt, I did not belong in this world but you know what? Every one of us has the incredible right to be in this world. Do not let people decide that their definition of you is who you are. No one can define who you are; you are the only one that can define yourself.

By changing your thoughts just remember that your thoughts aren't a statement of fact, but a declaration of your goal. It is not yet a fact but you are taking the first steps to manifest your dreams. You are in charge of your own life, the way you live it, the way you deal with issues and the way you present yourself. Make better choices and the end result will be much more peaceful and more pleasurable. Live your life with pride in who you are, have compassion and kindness for others and never forget that our Creator has an incredible plan in life for you to fulfill.

# Rob's Corner in Calgary



By Robert Champion

## Was a good run

19914 to 2016 was a good run selling street papers here in Calgary starting with the Spare Change paper, then Our Voice based out of Edmonton in 1996, then the Calgary Street Talk Newspaper

in 1997 based out of Calgary and finally Alberta Street News back in 2010. I started writing articles for Our Voice back in 1996.

## What's on my mind

People staying at the DI Drop-In Centre downtown Calgary are under strict rules. They have to be up early in the morning like around 5 a.m. And if they are suspected to have been drinking even if not drunk, they aren't allowed a bed for the night. Many of them have jobs, some on a fixed income like AISH or pension.

## Life is a mystery

Life can never be exactly the way we would like it to be or the way we want it to be. It can change so fast. We never know when it will come to an end. We never know when we could lose the people we love best. We never know when we could lose the things that we are attached to.

## Not a good year

Not a good year for our Canadian hockey teams. Not one team made it to the playoffs. First time in history that a Canadian team didn't make it to the playoffs from what I've heard. Sad really! Really disappointed that the Flames didn't make it even just to the first round.

## Boston Sports Bar a good place to hang out at

I recently started hanging out at the one on 17th Ave. S.W. The staff are awesome. Great service, reasonable prices. No shortage of staff. Also they have 19 big screen TVs to choose from. If you are into sports it is definitely the place to be.

## Last Say of the Day - Be thankful

Be thankful that you have your health, good friends, a roof overhead and food to eat!

## My Mother's Arms

By Angelique Branston

My mothers arms could always chase away the nightmares,  
The dark thoughts that would seem to swarm around me  
And make me gasp for air.  
Her hand would gently smooth down my hair.  
Her presence alone drives away the darkness.  
As I raged through my teenage years  
She weathered the storm.

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# How my backseat driver became my hero

Story by John Zapantis,

Photo by Renato Frattin



How often have you heard the phrasing, “Quit being a backseat driver and just leave the driving up to me!”

That’s the angered response, I’d given to my girlfriend, Theresa Walsh Cooke, every time she’d managed to save the day, by warning me about the dangers ahead while my 2012 Toyota Corolla CE was about to drive right through a red light traffic intersection in Edmonton and saving me from some kind of head on collision with another vehicle trying to cross safely from the left side of the traffic intersection.

Those repeat scenarios happened about half a dozen times and each time I’d give my girlfriend an earful about being a backseat driver and to leave the driving up to me.

I, at the time, was obviously in Big Time Denial, but then that all changed, when I set out to attend a bird outing with my club, the Edmonton Nature Club.

It was on one of those many

bird outings with the club that I planned to attend one out in the Westlock area with the following members of the E.N.C.: Alberta Street News Founder and Editor Linda Dumont, my girlfriend Theresa Walsh Cooke and myself.

That Saturday morning in the summer of 2014 we all headed out in my 2012 Toyota Corolla CE accompanied by a caravan of around 10 cars in a car pool arranged by the Edmonton Nature Club. The car trip to the proposed area, where our club was about to view a variety of wild birds lasted for around one hour and a half.

The day’s birding trip for spotting birds consisted of a seeing a variety including a member of our club spotting a ruffed grouse standing erect in a ditch alongside a farmer’s field. These encounters with many other bird sightings made our birding trips worth the time and effort invested in our long drives throughout Alberta.

After our bird outing was completed after 5 p.m. that afternoon, I

decided to head back to Edmonton in my Toyota, with Linda Dumont seated in the back and my girlfriend Theresa accompanying me in the front right passenger’s seat. All three of us got into an interesting discussion about the day’s event. Just prior to arriving at the town of Westlock, while driving eastbound at a maximum of 100 km per hour, I looked over to my left shoulder side. I noticed three black crows flying side by side by the left side of our car about 100 feet overhead.

I enthusiastically and loudly announced to the occupants of my car, “Look everybody - three crows are flying in the air.”

That’s when I heard my girlfriend Theresa Walsh Cooke yell out a stern warning, “John,” as my car started to drift off its path, crossing slowly over to the opposing left lane towards what appeared to be an oncoming double trailer truck heading right towards us. I saw Theresa’s right hand quickly taking control of the 9 o’clock position of my car’s steering wheel and turning the wheel clockwise over to the 3 o’clock position, getting our car back safely into our original right lane and avoiding a near head on collision.

I was amazed at Theresa’s impeccable timing in preventing what could have become a horrific highway disaster that saved the lives of my editor, my girlfriend and myself from becoming headline news in every major paper in Alberta. I bet that would have had the Alberta Street News and its vendors and volunteer staff shaking their heads in disbelief.

**My hero - from page 20**

After that terrifying wake up call, I immediately came out of denial, thanking my girlfriend Theresa for her courage in saving our lives and vowed to her that from now on I'd always have my eyes on the road while concentrating on driving safely to the next destination. I also vowed to her that I'd never again pre-judge her on her good calls and then refer to her as a back seat

driver!

To this day, I often joke whenever we're on a drive to somewhere that she has earned her entitlement to the distinctive title of "Honourary Back Seat Driver" and has certainly managed to help me out of denial while preventing me from getting into other accidents. I am proud to admit that this little back seat driver of mine is certainly a hero. That I can't deny!

**Mom's Wisdom**

**By Joanne Bengner**

1. Smile. You don't want your face to freeze that way.
2. Don't play with your food.
3. Don't chew your gum in somebody's ear.
4. Keep your face, hands and your thoughts clean.
5. Don't slouch. Stand up straight.
6. Always tell the truth.
7. Wipe your nose. Use your handkerchief.
8. Clean up after yourself
9. Don't stare at people and don't point.
10. Excuse yourself.
11. Always be on time and keep your promises.

12. Don't repeat gossip or tell tales.
13. Don't pick your nose.
14. Don't brag about what you own.
15. Wipe your feet.
16. Don't boast and don't show off.
17. You catch more flies with sugar than with vinegar.
18. Little pitchers should be seen and not heard.
19. Don't talk with your mouth full.
20. Don't shout.

**Let Me Be Me**

**By Ryan Robertson**

Just for once I wish I could do as I please, uninhibited, unrehearsed and not under someone else's scrutiny. Some people do it already and seem to be doing fine.

In my day there were a lot of people trying to find themselves. Some would and others simply would not.

Sandwiched between then and now, I am grasping at the old way and trying to understand the highly technical world of today which I have nearly given up on.

"It is easier this way." The cries go out, but it sure doesn't seem to be. Everything has skyrocketed in price and governments are struggling

to keep people happy. Is this progress? One would certainly wonder ...

Everyone is in competition in this dog eat dog society. For what? Keeping up with the Joneses? Trying to be something or someone they're not? It doesn't seem to be a fair society and it isn't. You are held in your own little world – once you find your place you are never allowed out, so we conform and carry on most times wondering why things can't become better.

If there is a consolation it is that we do live in Canada – the best country in the world. The downturn now is a troubled economy, homelessness and people at either end of the scale are giving up.

**May**

In 1907 the pink carnation was chosen as the Mother's Day flower. Wear a white carnation for a departed mother.

The world's favourite season is the spring. All things seem possible in May. - Edwin Way Teale

You can taste eternity on a May morning. - Author Unknown

There is pressure on people everywhere and it now can be difficult to smile on a daily basis and mean it when we do.

It can be tough to live right now and look forward to the future when it is so uncertain. However, we must, for life cannot be relived and time is precious. We must have hope and try to set examples of good coping and be strong for one another. That way we can be ourselves and lead in our own world and hopefully be a positive influence in other's lives. It could be very rewarding.

So I must not give in. I must believe there are better days ahead. I must not succumb to what others do in a negative way. I must be me.

# Reflections from the Way of

## Decent work and income security (George Spady Centre)

By Mike Van Boom, Julien Hammond

Why is life always so hard? Why isn't my best effort enough? Why is it that no matter how hard I work, I can't get ahead? Why am I always behind? On my rent. On my bills. On my housework. Why can't I afford a home that is safe and healthy for me and my kids? Why do I seem to be fighting this battle all alone? Why am I always sad... and scared? And why do my kids always seem to know? Why can't I fix this?

These are heavy questions that rest heavy in the minds of too many of us. And for people experiencing profound poverty, these are questions that pound without rest. We know how important a strong economy is, and we believe that everyone should share in prosperity when we have it. But even in good times, we know there are so many being left behind.

There are those trying hard to make life a little easier. Westmount Presbyterian Church is redeveloping their land and rebuilding their church facility to make room for sixteen units of affordable housing for families. Faith communities across the city have worked hard for years to provide supports and end of life care for aging seniors. Businesses are hearing the call to pay their employees a living wage, and to provide benefits. But we're not there yet.

The road stretches out before us, as it did for our Lord. The

burden we carry together is very heavy and difficult; if we do walk it as Jesus did, our bodies will be marked with scrapes and bruises, sweat and tears. For on this journey, we go to be challenged and changed; to die and to rise with our Lord. Dying to our apathy, our blindness, our comfortable silence and the many forms of sin that hobble us; in mind, heart, hands and voice. And we go to rise with Jesus as a people newly freed and transformed to build God's Kingdom here on earth. With voices raised in the cause of love and justice; hands moving to the tempo of tenderness and compassion; minds in service of life and renewal; hearts reaching to fill the empty void of community and care experienced by us and our neighbours.

The road before us is difficult, but it is one filled with hope and promise, as spoken by the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together." (Isaiah 40:3-5)

## Peace and justice (Immigration Hall)

By Fr. Glenn McDonald and Majed Mardini

My name is Majed Mardini and I am a Syrian Refugee. I arrived in Canada in December after fleeing Syria and spending many years in Lebanon.



Majed is just one the 19.5 million refugees and 38.2 million internally displaced people of the world.

In the Gospel of Luke, Pilate examines Jesus at the behest of his accusers and says, "...I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him... I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

"Crucify him, Crucify him!"

Unwilling to defend the innocent, Pilate condemns Jesus to death, beginning the savior's terrible journey towards Calvary.

Lord Jesus, as we recall your first steps towards Calvary, you remind us that you accompany the innocent who have been forced to flee their homes. You know our anguish and our loss; our despair and our suffering.



## Gender equality (Mary Burlie Park)

Annie McKittrick, MLA, Sherwood Park

Marie Burlie or the Mother of Boyle Street came from Arkansas to Edmonton. She knew poverty and discrimination. She volunteered at the Bissell Center and later worked for the Boyle Street Co-op as a family outreach worker where she stayed for 23 years. To Mary, poverty was not just an economic status. It is part of a vicious cycle that perpetuates itself from generation to generation.

This park is also the setting for the memorial to the women who died at the Ecole Polytechnique.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him; Male and Female he created them

In Genesis 1:27 both man and women bear the image of God. Women bear the brunt of much of the injustice of the world.

In an unequal world women are the most unequal. Often to economic development planners women are invisible. In many countries, the contribution of women to the total economy goes largely unrecorded because they provide much of the unpaid labour as child raising, domestic work, field and farm work, laboring long hours in subsistence farming to feed their entire families. Often women self-deprive themselves of food as they believe that the earning members and most often the males members are more valuable than those who do domestic work and child-rearing. Those activities are considered devoid of economic value. Gender equality can only happen

when we recognize the value of child raising and the unpaid household work. This is why there is such a strong movement to have national childcare policies and to ensure that parents have access to affordable quality childcare. In addition we have to make sure that the mostly women workforce that provides childcare has access to a living wage.

The gospel of Christ is the new wine that must not be put into the old wineskins of paganism or materialism or secularism or any other questionable culture pattern. The Holy Spirit came to empower the church to transcend barriers that divided rich and poor, slave and free, young and old, men and women.

Paul in Galatians 3:26-29 essentially restated Joel's prophecy about the coming of the Holy Spirit's power without regard to race, gender or economic status.

You are all Children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Tragically Christians have often not recognized the difference between the culture of our world and the teaching of our Lord. Racism, sexism, elitism, oppression of the poor have often been upheld by the church--which is his body--because we have not permitted Christ to redeem our thought patterns, our emotional outlooks, our culture itself.

Thanks be to God for the women and men who have worked towards gender equality here in Edmonton, in Alberta, Canada

and throughout the world -Young women like Malala, the famous five including Nellie McClung who fought for women to have the vote, Premier Notley and Prime Minister Trudeau for ensuring parity in their cabinets, the advocates for wage equality in various workplaces and the mothers and fathers who teach their sons and daughters to expect gender equality.

## “End poverty in all its forms everywhere.”

The Bissell Centre

When we think of poverty in the context of the United Nations, we think of the Global South, and rightly so. But we need to begin in our own back yard. Bissell Centre's vision is to end poverty right here in Edmonton, and it has been striving towards that vision for over a century.

While there has always been poverty in Edmonton, developments in the last few years have led to a consensus that the situation has to change. Edmonton's economy and population were booming almost continuously from 2000 to 2014, but inequality has increased and the poorest are actually worse off.

The recent downturn in oil prices has highlighted the vulnerability of our province to economic factors beyond our control. When budgets have to be cut, the poor usually suffer the most.

# Reflections from the Way of the Cross

According to the most recent statistics, 12.3% of people in Edmonton are living in poverty—approximately one in eight. Children are more likely to live in poverty than adults. The poverty rate for children is 18.4%. This rate has been increasing since 2006. Almost 60% of children living in poverty have at least one parent working full-time year-round. Many jobs do not pay enough to avoid poverty even with full-time employment; 19.5% of all Edmonton workers earn less than \$15 per hour. Poverty is found in all parts of the city but is concentrated in certain neighbourhoods like this one.

The passage from Luke that we heard at the beginning of our walk calls us to let the oppressed go free. The Greek word translated as “oppressed” literally means “broken to bits.” To set free those who are broken to bits by life: this was Jesus’

ministry and it is to be ours. Jesus shows us how the radical love of the incarnation is to be lived out. To have an active faith that asks questions such as “who is captive?” or “what have I become blind to?” or “who around me is broken?” This is our task: to walk alongside the poor, proclaiming by our words and by our actions that God is present. We must bring our whole selves to this task, holding nothing back.

In March 2014 the City of Edmonton took the unprecedented step of starting a task force to eliminate –not manage or reduce, but eliminate – poverty in our city within a generation. I am co-chair of the task force along with Mayor Don Iveson. Our detailed strategy was approved unanimously by City Council in December. I don’t think it’s going to be easy but we actually believe it’s possible.

## Safe communities & ecological action (Ambrose Place)

**Marlene Orr, Lloyd Cardinal & Students from Archbishop O’Leary School**

We are here at Ambrose Place where chronically homeless Indigenous people are given a loving home, with attention paid to their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs. Efforts are made to heal the trauma they experience. We start to do that by providing a connection to the earth. Here we will reflect on Taking Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts.

Ambrose Place exists to house chronically homeless Indigenous people who have had wounds inflicted on their spirit, body, mind and emotions. The disconnect to who they are is evident in the myriad of life challenges they face. Connection to Mother Earth is vital to Indigenous identity. When we connect to Mother Earth, we understand all living creatures and plants are dependent on our Mother. When we understand this, we can make changes in our own lives to protect the earth from climate change and its impacts. We all need to take personal action and make lifestyle changes that will protect the earth and help her to heal. Let us fall love with creation, and accept responsibility to protect what God has so generously given us to sustain our lives.



# Shaking the Tree

By Timothy Wild

Kathleen Lahey, a law professor from Queen's University, recently wrote "Equal Worth: Designing effective pay equity laws for Alberta". In the document, published by the Parkland Institute, Lahey illustrates the deplorable fact that our province has the largest gender income gap in the country, at a staggering 41%. She adds, "Even when measured in terms of women's full-time, full-year earnings, the gender earnings gap in Alberta is 37% compared to just 28% for Canada as a whole." Building upon the foundation provided by her previous report, "The Alberta Disadvantage: Gender, taxation and income inequality", which outlined the impact of the ideological instrument of "detaxation" so loved by previous Tory governments, Lahey clearly demonstrates the need for comprehensive, policy-based, structural responses to gender-based economic (and social) disparity.

Lahey notes that the wage and income gap in our province is due to the interplay of a number of dimensions, including the point that women are more likely than men to work part-time, in lower paying sectors of the economy. Resource extraction, a predominantly male domain, for example, is considered more economically important than the traditionally female sectors of service or caring, and is compensated accordingly. She also demonstrates the fact that the labour force participation of women is significantly impacted by the assumptions of family responsibilities, such as the care of preschoolers, children and older adults, which remain, in practice, a largely female role. Women tend to have (and be culturally assigned) greater unpaid familial and social responsibilities, which obviously have an impact

on economic participation. Lahey notes that women spend an average of 35 hours per week on these roles, compared to 17 hours for men. If there is an assumption that a woman will be available to pull this so-called "double shift", it significantly limits her ability for sustained workforce participation. The lack of quality, affordable and developmentally appropriate childcare is also a factor, and certainly contributes to the impact of part-time work on a woman's income. All of the above leads to the appalling and disturbing situation that on average women in our province earn "\$31 100 less than their male colleagues each year". Lahey points out "by Canada Day 2016, Alberta men will have earned as much income in six months as it will take Alberta women the entire year to earn."

When dealing with gendered income disparity, there have been attempts to ensure that people are paid equally for equal work. Organized labour has played an important role in this advance and it is a good start. However, we are still left with the lingering problem of the overall disparity in wages between men and women. In response Lahey suggests that if we really want to tackle gender-based income inequality, we need to adopt some type of a pay equity framework. Lahey argues "Realistically, economic gender gaps can only be eliminated by implementing effective workplace strategies to improve women's opportunities to earn equal incomes, qualify for equal income security benefits, and accumulate equal savings." According to the report "The purpose of pay equity laws is to equalize women's wages to levels equivalent to men's all across the wage scale..." This would involve creating a way to

assess the "value" of work in sectors of the economy, and develop a process so that there could be the assignment of equal pay for work of equal value. Seems fair. But there is the rub. It is difficult to even start this discussion due to the presence of entrenched privilege, the influence of "traditional" values, and the residual impact of capitalist individualism, racism, sexism and classism. It also challenges the very notions of the place of the market, and its ability to respond in an effective way to complex structural issues. Pay equity is truly a counter-cultural concept. And an expansion of inclusion and belonging is not always welcome.

Although equity is a core element of social justice, it is frequently viewed as difficult to apply in practice. Oddly enough, people seem to find it easier to support vague bourgeois notions of equality than to concretely advance social rights of citizenship through the thoughtful application of measures of equity. The notion of the equality of opportunity, for example, is clearly useless if people are not at the same starting point. If we really want to reduce gender based income (and wealth) inequality we need to introduce more public policy initiatives based on principles and practices grounded in equity! John Rawls had a lot to say on this when he talked of the difference principle.

Rawls had a lot to say on this when he talked of the difference principle. And a systematic approach to the implementation of pay equity is certainly part of that. Yes, it is difficult to do, and it must be part of an integrated approach, but it is the right thing to do and is sorely needed.



# Confessions of a garage sale addict

By Joanne Benger

1. I can't resist a garage sale sign. I'm addicted and there is no Garage Sale Anonymous Club locally so I have to continue to go.
2. I limit myself to two dollars a week but I can easily stretch that two dollars into five bags full of treasure.
3. I love the free help yourself area at some garage sales. That is where you find the best stuff.
4. I buy expensive looking unused gift items to regift and feel virtuous for recycling even if they will never be used.
5. I buy anything and everything religious because heaven knows I need all the help I can get.
6. I just know that every old thing is a priceless antique just waiting to be discovered.
7. I know that under every 25 cent tag there is a valuable object d'art.
8. I get a criminal high as I pay so little for so much and slink off feeling like a thief.
9. I haggle because I know a lot sellers over price so they can lower the price for you and me and whomever dickers.
10. The worse the weather is, the better deals I can make especially if the sale is outside.
11. I never buy anything that needs a battery. If it worked it wouldn't have a battery.
12. I avoid anything with frayed electric cords. I have this fear of electrocution.
13. I never buy medications because that is too risky. The police could call.
14. Estate sales can be very emotional if I knew the departed but they are OK if a stranger died a long as he wasn't contagious.
15. I'm not greedy and you have to give if you want to get so I am always ready to give lots of my treasures to visitors. When people are too shy to accept, I sneak things into their cars.
16. I go to good garage sales twice – early to get the best choices and close to closing to get the best deals on what's left. I don't go in if there are six sellers behind a table and not a buyer in sight.
17. I avoid buying anything monogrammed or personalized because I don't want to change my name.
18. I find you can't go wrong buying piggy banks. Shake to see if you hear coins and you'll often end up with more than you paid.



## The Vulnerable

By Angelique Branston

We are the vulnerable  
The beaten down  
A nuisance to our own families  
The first ones to be hunted  
The prey caught in the mouth of the beast

She tells me of her struggles, as she shows me the  
bruises that mar her flesh  
The man that stalks her as she scavenges the ground  
for scraps

He tells of his struggles, stooped and frail, his voice  
catching

Mugged for his papers, no money to take home for  
his family

She quietly tells me, her voice so soft and kind  
How she does not mind her bed of air, it's the best  
place to rest her head in years

It is nothing new these struggles, nor is there any  
end in sight

It is this mortal state which is humanity  
In isolation, and voiceless we are consumed and  
ravaged

We must find our voice, and form bonds of love one  
with another

Leaving no weakness to be found by the hunter and  
the beast.