

# ALBERTA Street News

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**Homeless camp  
organized by volunteers  
may remain  
occupied all  
winter  
Story on page 5**



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# ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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## COVID-19 Blues

By Linda Dumont

COVID-19 has changed so many things. For me, my son and my grandson it meant unemployment and going on the government CERB money that paid us for 28 week. We were all employed with the YMCA and they closed March 13. Finally, the Don Wheaton YMCA downtown is reopened as of October 21 so my grandson was able to go back to full time employment. As a part time group exercise instructor I am still waiting to be recalled, and some classes will probably be cut.

Alberta Street News has been barely sustainable, with only a handful of vendors still able to work. Some spots, like the Strathcona Farmers' Market, are still closed to newspaper vendors. The volunteer writers have remained faithful and we do have every issue on line as well as a limited print run each

month.

I haven't worn my red high heels in more than seven months as there are no fun events to attend. I was informed that High Water, the video I starred in a year ago in May, will be shown in the Edmonton Short Film Festival, but what would have been a fun event seeing former cast members, is now just an on line showing of the video. That was my first and probably last acting job.

Even as I write this, I question the future - will we ever be able to travel freely to overseas countries for International Network of Street Papers summit meetings? Will people get used to watching exercise videos instead of coming to classes? And what about street news papers???

We must just wait and see!

In the meantime we walk around masked and frumpy, and avoid big family gatherings - what will Christmas be like without the big turkey dinner? Possibly a repeat of Thanksgiving with each family feasting on their own small turkey.

## The Twelve Days of Christmas

By Joanne Benger

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me:

- Twelve face masks
- Eleven ear savers
- Ten plastic gloves
- Nine hand sanitizers
- Eight Clorox wipes
- Seven packs of toilet paper
- Six face shields
- Five air hugs
- Four Skip the Dish
- Three curb side pick up

### Free Graffiti Removal

When I got a notice about graffiti on my garage door, the city also sent information on how to get free graffiti removal for up to \$750, I was pleased that the graffiti was removed. L.D.



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

# NOvember

**By Joanne Bengner**

November is the month of No. When I was young and we used longer abbreviations, November was shortened to Nov. , just as Alberta was shortened to Alta. instead of the modern AB.

I think NO is the perfect abbreviation for November because November is the month of NO. In junior high we first read Thomas Moore's poem which described November in terms of no.. It went like this:

*No sun, no moon*

*No morn, no noon*

*No dawn no dusk, no proper time of day.*

*No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease.*

*No comfortable feel in any member.*

*No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees.*

*No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds, November*

He wrote that in 1844 and it is still true. On the plus side we have no yard work, no yards to mow, no gardens to weed. For those of us who are older it is even better because there are no hot days, no skin baring summer clothing to wear. We can cover up in comfort. There are no pesky insects, no mosquitoes, no stinging bees, no house flies. There is no road construction and there are fewer lost tourists on the road. There is little fear of sun burn and we don't have to worry about food poisoning from under-cooked barbecue meat. As Thomas Moore would say: No sun burn, no e-coli, no strapless tops. No road detours, no constructions stops – November.

November is impossible but I would say yes to new winter wardrobes, the warmth of central heating, the invention of thermal underwear and hand warmers and polar fleece. After a hectic summer of masking and distancing I am actually looking forward to just sitting and doing NOTHING in the month of NOVEMBER.



## Thoughts written while wearing mittens during extreme cold

**By Joanne Bengner**

1. They say talking about the weather shows a lack of creativity.
2. Weather forecasts are in a nose dive. This is what global warming is all about.
3. The secret to staying warm is not to get cold.
4. It's a time of lower temps, higher snow-banks, shorter days, longer scarves, more clothes and less green.
5. People drive to the temp. The lower the temp the slower they drive.
6. Beards keep chins warm. Icicle beards and snow covered mustaches are very macho.
7. Should we breathe or eat ice fog
8. Snow escalation is a polite way of putting it.
9. It's brain freeze weather. There's a cold alert. Get cold, catch a cold.
10. It's hard to talk when our face freezes up. Keep frowning and your face will freeze that way.
11. Stay dry. Don't sweat and freeze. Don't touch any wet part of you to metal or you will stick until spring.
12. Use sun screen for reflected light from the snow, Wear sunglasses to prevent snow blindness.
13. You lose most of your heat from your head. Wear a toque. Keep warm today.
14. "Alcohol will warm you up." No, it will cool you down. You will feel warm as your core continues to cool.
15. It's freezing outside. Luckily I have food in the freezer. Freezing can be friend or foe.

# A Place to Belong

by Sharon Austin

Nathan stared out the taxi window at the mountains of snow edging the narrow road and the dark forest beyond. It was a long way from the small airport to The Northern Star Lodge that his grandfather ran, outfitting adventurers and housing tourists who explored the national park. It had been five years since he'd last been here and that was for his father's funeral when he was seven. The tragic memories were burned into Nathan's mind as vividly now as if it were yesterday. His mother was a city girl and she hated the north, the isolation and the long cold winters. One day, when Nathan was seven, she had whisked him away to the city to live in an apartment. His father found out where they were and came after them but tragically he had been killed in an accident.

Now mother was planning to marry a rich businessman as old as his grandfather and his life would change again. It had been hard enough getting used to the big city school, taking city buses, and the noise and traffic but in time he had grown used to it. The bad thing was Claude never wanted him around and ignored him the few times they'd been together. Nathan had asked so many times to go and visit his grandpa but mother always refused. All of a sudden she had decided it was time for a visit and here they were.

Finally the lodge came into view, the log exterior gleaming red in the late afternoon sun. Somehow the lodge looked smaller, older, and more run down than he remembered but it still felt welcoming. As Nathan and his mother entered, old Joe, the Metis man who had been with the family forever, stared at them in shock. He quickly crossed himself as if to ward off evil and slipped behind some high shelves.

"Hello, Mr. Logan," Nathan's mother said brightly. She was being her most charming self but those who knew her well knew she could change in an instant to be as cruel as the cold north wind. His Grandfather looked up in surprise as he stared at the two of them.

"Nathan, how you've grown! You look so much like your dad did," he burst out then he turned on Nathan's mother with a cold blue stare. "What do you want, Lois?" he said coldly.

"I thought it was time Nathan came for a visit, it's been a while," mother said

sweetly.

"Five years, Lois," Grandfather bit out. "What do you want now?"

Nathan stared at the floor as shame washed over him. Mother had lied to him again for grandpa didn't even know they were coming. Mother dropped her charming act.

"I'm getting married soon and I need someone to watch the boy while we go travelling the world. This is my big chance at being somebody and I can't take Nathan."

Old Joe came and took Nathan by the arm. "Come," he said. "I'll show you where You'll sleep tonight. Let them talk."

Up in his room Nathan could hear the raised voices below. It made him feel very small that they were arguing about who would take him. Not wanting to hear any more he walked quietly out a back door into the cold and snow. Finding a well packed snowmobile trail he started to follow it as it wound its way through the forest. Suddenly he remembered the fort his dad had built for him and he wondered if it was still standing. He remembered it was down the trail and then off to the right to the river. He had to break his own trail to find the fort and his thin city boots soon filled with snow making his feet very cold. At length he came upon the fort but the roof had fallen in and the door had blown off in some winter storm. Sitting on a log, he remembered all the happy days he had spent here with his father, fishing, and swimming and hiking.

Suddenly, Nathan realized it was starting to get dark. How could the sun have sunk below the hills so quickly; it was only late afternoon but then this was the north. He began to run back down the trail that he had made but darkness was coming quickly. If he could just get back to the snowmobile trail he could find his way back. Half an hour later, Nathan realized he was hopelessly lost in the dark forest and no one knew where he was. The darkness pressed against him like a heavy cloak as he sat down in the snow to rest.

"Please help me, Lord," he began to pray as the cold night wind whipped around him. Sensing another presence just out of reach, Nathan called out: "Hello, can you help me!" A huge furry form lunged towards him and he cowered in fear. Was it a bear, or a wolf, his heart raced in panic. Then a big black and white dog began to lick his face and Nathan hugged him in relief. The dog began to nudge him with

his big head forcing him to get up out of the snow, then he began to walk in front of him guiding him out of the forest through the darkness. Soon they were back on the snowmobile trail but still the dog walked before him, his bushy tail leading the way. When the lodge was in plain view the dog stopped at the edge of the woods and watched as he ran towards the welcoming light. Nathan stopped at the door and looked back but the big dog was gone gliding back into the forest as silently as he had come.

Old Joe nearly fell over when he saw Nathan charge in the door all covered with snow. "You shouldn't be out alone in the dark," he scolded. "We thought you were upstairs resting."

Excitedly, Nathan told Joe of his misadventure and the big friendly dog that led him home. Old Joe stared at him with dark eyes that seemed lit from within with an eerie glow. He crossed himself again then said, "Come with me boy, I'll show you something." Joe led him to the great room where a warm fire burned in the huge brick fireplace. Grandfather was asleep in an easy chair. Joe showed him the family photographs hung high above the fireplace telling him who each person was.

"There," Nathan cried in excitement. "That's the dog that showed me the way home!"

It was a sepia photo of an old bearded man and the black and white dog. Joe's voice was low and reverent. "You've met Levi," he said. "He's a legend around here. That man in the picture is your great grandfather Nate, a real mountain man. He was in his eighties when he fell through the ice in the early spring. Levi tried to save him but he couldn't. He waited by the hole for two days for his master to surface but of course he never did. Poor Levi set to howling then ran into the woods and was never seen again but folks swear he still roams these woods helping people to find their way. He would have known you're old Nate's kin."

Nathan stared at Joe with wide eyes. "Was he a ghost, he felt so real!"

"A ghost, a spirit, an angel, who knows," Joe said quietly staring at the picture. "Grandpa woke up and laughed. "Don't be filling the boy's head with your old fables, he's going to be living here with us now if he wants to. I'm getting old and I need a young man to help me around the place."

# Homeless camp set up as a protest

Story and photo by Linda Dumont

In September, Gazebo Park near Whyte Avenue on Edmonton's south side was covered with an assortment of tents housing about 50 homeless people. The camp appeared very well run, with a campfire where people could sit and get warm, and an open tent set up where food was stored and served to the campers. The camp was organized and maintained by a group of volunteers as a demonstration to bring awareness to the three levels of government that something needs to be done to address the problem of homelessness.

Cameron Noyes, spokesperson for the camp, said, "The reason we put up the camp was at the suggestion of some homeless people. They had their tent destroyed the night before. It had to be a protest in a very visible spot because winter is coming and not enough is being done for seniors and people at risk of being homeless.

"We have attracted the attention of those who work with housing in the city – YESS (the youth emergency shelter services) SAGE (working with elderly people), Edmonton Housing Trust and other. To date we have housed about 15 people in the neighbourhood, advocating with landlords for them. We are trying to get as many people off the street as possible."

Noyes said there has been a lot of support for the camp. They are able to give out hampers regularly, as well as three meals a day, with the food donated by private individuals and from restaurants. Everyone living in the camp is homeless, and the volunteers take different shifts looking after the camp. The group is completely independent, although some of the volunteers work

with different organizations.

When the police gave notice near the end of September that the camp had to be disbanded by 11 a.m. the following morning, the campers protested, circling the camp. They were given a two week extension. After that, the camp was moved a few blocks north to the Light Horse Park on September 28th.

"We did not move because we had no response from the city. They did not help. Everyone is less vulnerable in the camp," Noyes said. "We have a fire to keep warm, and first aid and Boyle Street is opening the public washroom 24 hours a day. Some of it has really been empowering for them (the residents of the camp) and some of them want to be involved in homeless advocacy."

Noyes has been doing advocacy for a decade. He is out on the street every day with his dog, Boudica, whom he credits as being a great outreach worker. They would leave granola bars and Ensure out for the people, but now donations of food have been coming in.

Noyes said they did lobby the federal government to release some money for housing, and they finally are talking about getting housing right away. But he said the provincial government won't give anything for the homeless.

"They are even worse than Ralph Klein. They ran the Expo Centre and spent 4.8 million dollars. Now we have to keep up the camp and keep the food coming. We're waiting for the city to come up with some solutions. Until then we have to work harder and be more stubborn. We have a couple of lawyers working with us."

Noyes said they plan to keep the camp going all winter or until everyone in it has been housed. Anyone who wants to volunteer to help out with the camp or to donate food or other items can drop by the camp and speak to the volunteers on duty.

## A Place to belong

Continued

His mother had chosen Claude and left him here with grandpa but Nathan was glad for he knew this was where he belonged.

Late that night Nathan looked out the window at the dark tree line hoping for a glimpse of the big dog but all that met his eyes was the soft reflection of the stars glimmering on the snow.



# Selfless face mask maker contributes on the frontlines

Story and photo by John Zapantis

A lot of us have had role models that we have often looked up to for inspiration and guidance, when trying to emulate that walk of productivity and success.

One lady who owes that success to her father, who worked on the frontlines as a Naval Officer and to her grandmother who brought food to soldiers in active combat during the Second World War, is Kathleen Hobbins, age 58, who currently lives on an acreage a few miles outside of Thorsby, Alberta.

When COVID-19 first arrived on the world scene back in March, 2020, the major controversy of this terrorizing virus and its deadly potential for killing thousands of people worldwide, encouraged a determined and innovative Hobbins to jump to the pumps, doing her moral duty for mankind by selflessly working the frontlines like her mentors once did.

She decided on making that noble and selfless contribution by working on her Brother model sewing machine and assembling various art illustration designed COVID-19 facemasks for her many friends and relatives that included uncles,

aunts and cousins all living in Canada, United States and throughout other regions of the world.

She read in papers and from close loved ones about the misfortune of thousands of people worldwide, who had fallen prey to that deadly virus, COVID-19.

Hobbins then gave it some serious thought, constantly reminding herself about those horrible tragic statistics. She set out with a plan to help prevent other possible deaths from occurring within those family circles.

In a recent interview with ASN, Hobbins elaborated on what encouraged her drive in helping to make that big difference by making Covid19 facemasks for that important cause. Hobbins said, "My grandma was in the military during World War Two. My dad was in the Royal Navy. If I would have joined the forces, I would have been fourth generation military. So it was my duty to fulfill what my grandmother would have wanted me to do and make COVID-19 masks for everyone. My grandmother passed out lunches to the soldiers on the frontlines."

Prior to Hobbins mission in making masks during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, she has never been a stranger to the crafts scene and has always kept on with her sewing and knitting. This has given her the proper insight and experience to take on the challenging

worldwide, Hobbins was inspired by the thought of her grandmother's selfless contributions and commitment in helping to bring food to soldiers on the frontlines during the Second World War.

Hobbins, too, now wanted to fight on the frontlines, but fighting a different war, the war on COVID-19! Hobbins said, "It felt like what I was supposed to do, reflecting on what my grandma did, when she brought food to the soldiers on the front-line during the Second World War."

Despite showing her passion in helping to make that big difference during these unprecedented times, Hobbins has had her near death close call with H1N1 back in 2008, but fortunately bounced back to a successful recovery, after self isolating for the required 14 days.

The recovery is also the reason why she's decided to give back. She realizes how fortunate she is to still be alive and to be blessed the more in helping to fill that demand for her important services.

The horrible experience, of coming close to death while struggling with H1N1 will always remind her of how blessed she is to have her health back again.

Hobbins said, "I couldn't get out of bed. I had to crawl to go to the bathroom. I was sick from January to basically October. I got H1N1 on January 20th of 2008 while in Mexico on a holiday."

The good Samaritan task of giving out free COVID-19 masks to personal friends, family, aunts, uncles and cousins doesn't just stop there. One day she walked into a pet supply store in Thorsby called Pet Necessities, where she usually shops for food for her pet.

It was there, while shopping, that she shared her story with the owner, Carol Schofield, telling her about her campaign to sew masks and handing them out free to loved ones, various relatives and friends as a preventative measure in protecting them from the spread of the deadly virus.

The owner was impressed by Hobbins' compassionate story about helping in the fight to take on COVID-19 and suggested that she continue to make more masks, and advised her to have them placed in the store for sale.

Hobbins felt honored by the friendly and helpful advice and suggested to the owner that they donate some of the proceeds from the sales of the masks to a favorite charity.



Pet Necessities Owner Carol Schofield and her husband Frank Raffa proudly hold up COVID-19 face masks made by Kathleen Hobbins while the store's house duck Cashew struggles to get all of the attention inside Pet Necessities located in Thorsby, Alberta.

moral task of sewing facemasks to help to prevent people from being afflicted by this threatening virus. She reflects on the valid reasons for her passion for sewing. Hobbins said, "I do it also for my crafting and keeping my mind busy. A busy mind is a healthy mind. Knitting is my hobby too." When the corona virus first made its appearance

Continued on page 7

# Christmas Traditions

By Joanne Bengner

1. Anonymously give jars pf money to people in need.
2. Buy two turtledoves. Give one to a friend and keep the other. As long as your both keep your turtledoves you will remain friends.
3. When you wrap a Christmas gift make a wish for the person who will receive it.
4. Watching the fire log on TV has been a Christmas tradition since 1986.
5. When giving clothing as a gift put money in the pocket to guarantee future wealth and always put money in gifts of wallets or purses so they will never be empty.
6. It is unlucky to sing carols any time except the Christmas season and it is unlucky to send carolers away without giving them money.
7. It is unlucky to refuse a gift or to refuse to eat Christmas cake or mince pie.
8. There's a lucky way to eat Christmas cake. Don't cut into the cake until Christmas eve, then eat one slice a day for the twelve days of Christmas.
9. When you mix your Christmas pudding have everyone in the house, even babies, stir three times from east to west for luck. Then everyone makes a wish, which must not be told until it comes true.
10. Make a wish before you eat your first mince tart of the season and eat plum pudding at Christmas to avoid losing a friend before next Christmas.
11. Wear at least one item of new clothing on Christmas day for luck.
12. In Victorian times people told ghost stories on Christmas eve and Germans believed that if you sat quietly by the fire place on Christmas eve, your dear departed would join you.
13. In times past people amused themselves with tongue twisters. Here are three oldies. Candy cane cookies keep kids coming. Cheery cute caroling critters. Santa sings shining star songs.
14. All decorations should be taken down on the Twelfth Night but no sooner or you will have bad luck for the next twelve months.
15. This year you might like to use the old Christmas toast when clicking glasses for luck, "Next year if there aren't any more of us lets hope there aren't any less."

## Selfless face mask maker

Continued from page 6

The owner agreed to Hobbins' suggestion and recommended that for every adult mask sold for \$5.00, \$1.00 from that individual mask sold would be donated to Educate Not Euthanize, a non-profit animal rescue organization located on the Enoch First Nations Reserve.

Since Hobbins also specializes in the assembly of children's masks, the owner and Hobbins agreed that the children's masks would be given out for free.

The owner was more than satisfied with this plan and to honor it, she suggested that for every mask sold at \$5.00, she'd return \$4.00 to Hobbins for a job well done. In reply, the humble mask maker showed her true colors by declining the offer. She told her that the \$4.00 received for every mask sold would be only used for purchasing more fabric materials to produce more masks that she'd resupply to the pet supply store for continued sales until COVID-19 is finally defeated.

## Joanne's letter to Santa

By Joanne Bengner

First I must say thanks. My favourite present last year was the manicure set you gave me. Sure, I have other manicure sets but this one was extra special because its case listed many exotic locations including Milan, Italy, where I would be going in June, 2020 for the Global Street Newspaper Summit. The manicure set was full of promise and dreams. I'd reconnect with writing friends from around the world as editor Linda Dumont and I proudly represented Canada, Alberta and Alberta Street News. Several of our writers have been nominated for awards and we might have another winner this year like Angelique Branston, who made it to the short list in 2019. Just looking at the manicure set filled me with dreams of wonderful possibilities.

Then along came COVID-19 and the summit was cancelled. Still, nothing can take away the joy behind my gift of promise. Even now just looking at it

makes me picture the new normal when we once again travel fearlessly to summits in over packed planes to attend lectures in crowded rooms.

I am not sure what I want this year but I want all of my presents to be of the sort that say, "The best is yet to come." I don't want hum drum sensible things that make life in isolation a bit less dreary. I want gift certificates for places that are still closed and the frivolous little things I will need when my social life resumes. Give me gifts of hope and joy and help me to share a vision of a bright, joyful post pandemic world to come.

And stay safe. Santa. Wear that face mask and use that hand sanitizer as you make your rounds on Christmas eve. The world needs you more than ever this year and we want to celebrate the recovery with you next Christmas.

I look forward to sitting on your lap and rubbing your whiskers for luck in 2021 as vendors once again sell Alberta Street News in the background.

**Due to the cost of printing, Alberta Street News is becoming a bi-monthly paper.  
Place an ad to help pay printing costs. Call Linda at 780-428-0805 for ad rates.**

# COVID-19 caused sleep deprivation

By John Zapantis

When COVID-19 first arrived on the world scene, citizens of the world started to inevitably feel the mental, emotional and physical effects of this disease. After millions of worldwide company layoffs had occurred due to the cautious preventive measures implemented by world governments, preventing people from working together in clusters, which would cause its employees to possibly contract this deadly virus, the discussions would start about people losing an optimistic outlook on what the future would hold.

The suicide rate in addition to a whole array of other problems would soon start to impact millions of people worldwide, despite not being afflicted by that deadly pathogen, COVID-19.

Thousands of people in Canada alone, felt the effects of the mass company layoffs that seemed to rock the foundations of who we are as a nation of high moral standards, abundant employment and a credible social safety net, along with an accredited public health care system. It was now about to crumble. CERB temporary assistance recipients, were now all eligible to receive Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 'Sunny Ways' handout. For some of those people, the need to fuel their addictions, for either alcohol, or drug dependencies, would send those addictions sky rocketing to historic record levels, like we've never seen before, or would have never imagined in our lifetime.

I, as a healthy individual, who is constantly motivated by the interesting task of working as an Alberta Street News Media Relations Coordinator and Contributing Writer, was soon starting to follow in the shoes of those feeling its mental, emotional, and physical impact. That rude awakening that seems to be impacting all of us in one way or another, which we all seem to know how to define, while forcefully having to tolerate that 'New Normal' is an uninvited bedfellow I can now detest as my own living nightmare called Sleep Deprivation.

I frequently would start to awaken from my sleep during the first three months

of the COVID-19 pandemic arrival. The problem was evident, when I started waking up at 3 a.m., 5 a.m. and 7 a.m. and would end up going to the bathroom to unload, because of the excessive amounts of Tim Horton coffees that I was notable for drinking, three to six times a day.

Right around July, despite walking one mile every evening for three months during the pandemic, which was known to help me sleep better, I decided to cut down on my coffee intake that is known for creating insomnia and soon decreased my coffee from six cups a day to three. That change in habit just didn't seem to allow me to sleep better, because I was still downing coffee late in the evening, which contributed to some sort of sleep deprivation that I was still grappling with. So by the end of August I began walking three miles a night to see if this might help in recovering what I lost in my regular eight hours of sleep.

I soon found out, while constantly worried about what the future would hold for Canada and the world economically, despite walking those three miles and returning after that each evening to sleep, I was awakening now only twice in the morning, but still feeling agitated about the world scene and also worried about the transition I'd soon be making while applying for my retirement packages, notably the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), Old Age Security pension (OAS), Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and the Alberta Seniors Benefit (ASB).

Other worries that inevitably added on to my lack of sleep included my constant concerns about Canada's potential to continually support the masses, who were placed on various forms of social security benefits and the never ending worry of wondering if my benefit forms that were recently mailed to me, would ever be properly processed by Service Canada. I even at times worried whether these mailed forms were just a ruse sent to my residence, by meticulous scammers, looking to steal my personal information to fuel their addictions in celebration of a 'Win Fall' at my unfortunate expense!

As of the end of August I had been only sleeping six hours a day, which automatically puts me in the danger zone, for either possibly a heart attack or a stroke. I found out about this startling news, while going on the internet and popping the question to a fact finding source of information, asking a simple question, "Why do I wake

up three times in the morning?"

The Department of Neurology was the fact finding source that I confided in to find out why I was having my sleep frequently disrupted and the headline that answered back as my diagnoses read, Sleep Deprivation. The first paragraph reads the following: 'Sleep Deprivation is not a specific disease. It is usually the result of other illnesses and life circumstances that can cause its own symptoms and poor health outcomes. Sleep deprivation means you're not getting enough sleep. For most adults the amount needed for best health is seven to eight hours each night.

When you get less sleep than that, as many people do, it can eventually lead to a whole host of health problems. These can include forgetfulness, in-attentiveness, being less able to fight off infections and even mood swings and depression.'

Some of those facts confirmed in the above information were what I was now adversely affected by, which included, forgetfulness, like when I'd be up in the morning going to my car and either forgetting to take my car keys with me, or my COVID-19 face mask. Mood swings were another confirmed fact that seemed to follow me around, while trying to deal with some other friend, who was battling a relapse for alcohol addiction.

One last fact that seemed to really follow me around was depression. I couldn't seem to shake that off at times, other than when I'd get back to writing my stories for the Alberta Street News. That always motivates my interests, while managing to prevent me from falling into some kind of depression, during this depressing and deadly pandemic.

To continue on with some other aspects of the Sleep Deprivation fact sheet: Symptoms include drowsiness, the inability to concentrate, impaired memory, reduced physical strength and diminished ability to fight off infections.

The only symptom that I seemed to have that lined up with any of these symptoms was, the inability to concentrate. That would happen when people at the library were a little too loud while talking in front of me, when I'd be typing on a computer. I will attest that has never ever happened prior to the arrival of COVID-19, because I certainly do not suffer from Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)!



What really scared me into considering a visit to talk to my doctor for a diagnosis to determine why I couldn't consistently sleep, was when I dreamt in my sleep one night that I was being chased by a yellow glowing pulsating bus, while driving in my Toyota car. The bus kind of resembled a human heart on wheels, where you could see alien like people from its windows.

The nightmare was so frightening that I had quickly awakened from my sleep to be greeted unexpectedly by my right hand that felt tingling and puffed out.

It then dawned on me that the heart shaped, erratically pulsating heart shaped bus was a 'Red Flag' warning me, I had awakened on time in noticing that this was a true warning for signs of a possible stroke that may have ended up killing me in my sleep, had not I been warned by this helpful nightmare!

So with that dire warning sign and the fact I was always having my sleep disrupted a little after COVID-19 had arrived on the world scene, it was time to phone my doctor to consult him and try to determine, why my sleep was being disrupted on a higher frequency.

When I called my doctor explaining to him what I've been sharing with the ASN readers in this story, he immediately suggested sleeping pills, but did not immediately confirm to me that I may be suffering from sleep deprivation. I decided to challenge him on what procedures I would take after telling him that I had done

some research on Sleep Deprivation and asked him to put me on trial. I told him to put his suggestion of prescribing sleeping pills on hold and told him about a more viable game plan that I had in mind in navigating this issue I was having with inadequate sleep.

I told him that my research on sleep deprivation suggested that exercise for twenty minutes to half an hour, six hours before bed time would do the trick in tiring me out and helping me to sleep better. Another helpful suggestion from the informative source, was to totally eliminate coffee from my diet.

So, I told my doctor to put me on probation to see if I could carry out my exercise priorities and I also vowed to him that I would totally abstain from drinking coffee that obviously served as a contrib-

uting factor in constantly awakening me from my sleep.

My final wish was to call him back in two weeks to give him a progress report, while trying to achieve success with this new program and hopefully stabilizing ground with my normal sleeping hours without endangering my life any further. My doctor has total confidence in me and agreed to putting the idea on trial.

I was feeling a little fatigued this week, from only sleeping four to five hours this time. I told my ASN Editor Linda Dumont, who was morally supportive as this story is being written on Monday, October 19th that I managed to finish this story that will be added to another story that I sent her previously for the upcoming Alberta Street News November/December 2020 issue.



**ASN Writer John Zapantis stands proudly in front of a Gorgosaurus inside the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum on his previous trip on September 5th, 2020.**

**The museum is located about 19 kilometers North of Grande Prairie in Wembley, Alberta. The Gorgosaurus is a genus of the Tyrannosaurid dinosaurs that lived in Western North America about 76.6 and 75.1 million years ago. The adult Gorgosaurus could reach a height of 8 to 9 m (26 to 30 feet) in height and could weigh up to 2.8 to 2.9 tons. This Gorgosaurus was discovered outside of Wembley Alberta. Alberta Street News would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum's Executive Director Linden Roberts for allowing Alberta Street News consent for this project. Photo by Philip J. Currie Staff Member Dan Diamond**

# To infinity...and beyond. (Or back again.)



By Allan Sheppard

Two plus two equals four, not five. That proposition and the simple equation that supports it deftly define a conflict that is at the heart of George Orwell's dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-four*. A central thread of the story involves efforts by the main character, Winston Smith, to challenge the authority of ideological belief, enforced by a totalitarian government personified in a possibly mythical figure called Big Brother, that two plus two equals five, by pointing to the reality, observable to anyone with hands and fingers, that two plus two equals four.

That. Does. Not. End. Well. Ideology prevails over reality, truth, facts, science, mathematics, common sense: whatever thinking people—citizens—know and are capable of knowing, from experience and observation, rather than from pronouncements that they must accept as an act of faith and obedience, contrary though they may be to reality as they find it.

The book is an extreme demonstration of gaslighting, written soon after the play and movies that inspired the term, and long before the concept entered popular psychological, sociological, and political discourse.

Wikipedia defines gaslighting as, “a form of psychological manipulation in which a person or a group covertly sows seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or group, making them question their own memory, perception, or judgment... (u)sing denial, misdirection, contradiction, and misinformation... to destabilize the victim and delegitimize the victim's beliefs.”

When the book was published, readers, especially those with conservative inclinations, interpreted it as a parable warning freedom-loving peoples of the West against the arguable and demonstrable evils of Communism and, for the absolutists among them, Socialism. That interpretation was obvious, and there seems little doubt it was valid and intended. But is it really that simple: collectivists and socialists bad, individualists and capitalists good? That might have seemed true in 1948, when the Soviet Union and its allies and satellites seemed so blatantly and unapologetically manipulative and ideological, while Western regimes seemed, in comparison, benign, trustworthy. But is it obviously true today?

Russia and other totalitarian regimes, some of them still Communist, some even claiming to be democracies, still practice sometimes subtler forms of gaslighting in dealing with their citizens and in relationships with other countries, whether friendly or not. But are other countries, notably the United States and the United Kingdom, but not excluding our own country, Canada, and our own province, Alberta, guilty of similar, if less obvious to us, manipulations?

Observers have noted that Orwell learned much of what he came to understand about the realities of propaganda while working as an information officer for the British government in India and during the Second World War.

In 1969, just twenty years after Orwell's book was published, a memo circulated within the R.J. Reynolds tobacco company declared that, “(doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the ‘body of fact’ that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy,” concerning the health risks of smoking. One would have to search hard and widely, including among the most manipulative of authoritarian regimes, to find a more “Orwellian” concept, or a better example of gaslighting as a public relations strategy.

And how are we to think of the so-called “Communications” offices and agencies, so ubiquitous among corporations and governments (in which I confess to having worked for several years) except as propaganda arms of business and governance in disguise?

One need look no further than to the United States and the United Kingdom for

blatant examples; or into our own country and province for less obvious, though hardly less serious, examples.

Doubt is everyone's product these days. Or so it seems, not without reason. Which reminds me of a quote, kept close for twenty-five years now, that I like to share from time to time, as opportunity presents itself: “Democracy, (Jason Kenney) says, depends upon people of different political ‘bents’ reconciling varying views in a public forum. ‘Are people with fixed opinions on issues,’ Mr. Kenney queries, ‘not supposed to enter public debate?’” [Alberta Report, May 1996, reporting on the Winds of Change conference of right-wing thinkers organized in Calgary by, among others, Mr. Kenney, Ezra Levant, and David Frum as a means of uniting the political right; Mr. Kenney was at the time head of the Canadian Taxpayers' Association.]

There is an obvious response to that: How can people with fixed opinions on issues reconcile varying views on anything? Kenney was never asked, nor did he ever answer, that question, other than to demonstrate through his actions in federal and political leadership: They can't; all they can do is engage in a kind of trench warfare in which everyone seeks, but no one gives or concedes, and inch or a compromise. It's an all-or-nothing, zero-sum game.

Which may explain why absolutists among us, including I assume, Mr. Kenney, are so fond of Orwell and his writings.

Two plus two equals four is an absolute statement. It has only one answer, and that answer is true; we cannot trust anyone who argues otherwise—in negotiations or anything else. That answer offers certainty, which is the true reward of holding fixed opinions.

If only things were that simple. Two plus two does, indeed, equal four. And the inverse of that equation, four is equal to two plus two is also true. But four is also equal to other arithmetic formulations: three plus one, eight divided by two, two squared, the square root of sixteen, the cube root of eight plus the fourth root of 16. In fact, it quickly becomes apparent that there is an infinite number of solutions to the equation four equals x. Moreover, once one concedes that four contains an infinity of solutions, one must also concede that the twos in two plus two equals four, also embody

# OPINION

## Warehouses Run By Sadists

By Rodney Graham

I've lived in Manitoba Housing for 14 years now - in the west end. WRHA (Winnipeg Regional Health Authority), have two offices in it - converted apartments - although there are only a handful of people needing special care; the rest are healthy - they're 'over 55' tenants - elderly. The place is completely overstaffed with home care and even nurse supervisors - who do almost nothing at all.

Several years back, when \$30 million dollars was given to Manitoba Housing, the changes we saw were increased security, and nice furniture for the home care workers in their renovated apartment offices. Many of the tenants are so poor, ironically, they can't afford beds - they sleep on old mattresses on the floor. Half of them need to use the food banks, too. There are no less than 13 cameras in the building, watching these elderly and a few disabled, although the place has never been known for crime at all...

The home care workers and nurses sit around their comfortable office/apartments gossiping and watching tenants 24/7 - when they aren't watching tv or sleeping. It really seems they are not there to 'care' for them but to be prison guards. I believe the lowest paid home care make about \$25.00 an hour minimum - The nurse supervisors - \$40.00 and more an hour.

They are rude, calloused, and they bully the poor, elderly, and disabled, and especially they encourage their favorite tenants to gossip about their neighbors and accuse them - and if anyone complains they target them and falsely accuse them.

The police, as most of us have seen on tv lately, always have bad apples. Here in

Winnipeg some are willing to side with these Nurse Ratcheds. They beat an old man up recently - probably because he was goaded into saying something stupid or for yelling... they do this all the time - playing mind games with helpless people. It seems to me the tenants are nothing but fodder. They are products to be used by overpaid health care professionals and home care people who

are poorly trained, and people who should not even be working with vulnerable poor people at all. The job seems to attract lazy, calloused, opportunistic people. I talked to one recently and he said he was going to take a job in the security field because it was easy. He instead chose home care because it was not only easy, but it paid much better too.

I have been harassed now for seven years because I had the courage to complain about abuse where I live. The place is full of corruption, greed, and nepotism. It is an industry of misery living off the backs of the poor, vulnerable, and needy. They are concerned about their own 'welfare' not that of the needy - they are glorified poverty pimps in sheep's clothing...

Since living in public housing I've seen innocent people bullied out - run out of their homes. I've seen others evicted based on false allegations by the 'favorites' - the tenants who suck up to home care and nurses and gossip and bully with them. One woman, who was too simple minded to move her furniture for the 'regular' bedbug spraying, was evicted for it - used to try to sneak in after she had been evicted. She had been targeted by some



of the 'favorites' previously and that is probably the real reason she was evicted, they were probably looking for an excuse. When it was -20c outside she would try to sneak in - how she survived I don't know. It's quite possible she succumbed to the harsh winter elements in Winnipeg, as do several every year in Winnipeg...

The favorites and home care would watch closely to keep the poor woman out. One thing I remember about her is that she was one of the few people who were friendly and kind - she let me in once when I locked myself out - the others refused even though she was new and the others knew I lived there. They hated her because she dumpster dived and picked up cigarette butts - they said she made the place look bad. They often ask why there are so many homeless - well, I think I've just described a couple of reasons why haven't I...

The moneys given by the government, you can be assured they will try to steer towards benefit of these opportunistic gangsters and towards making their properties prison warehouses that are run by sadists.

When will things change and when will we ever get justice for the poor?

### To infinity and beyond continued

infinities of solutions and descriptions. What does that say about certainty and doubt? About the utility of fixed opinions, however sincerely held?

And what are we to think when Mr. Kenney, as premier of our province, concedes, after a career of arguing otherwise, that the future of Alberta's oil industry lies in recognizing and accommo-

dating environmental concerns?

Is he bravely abandoning the trench of his fixed opinions? Is he gaslighting, casting doubt, on his and his supporters' realities? Or is he merely stirring up controversy as a distraction?

I have no idea.

Do you?

Does he?

# Buddy, can you spare a Deutschmark?

By Timothy Wild

I've only ever panhandled once. That was more than enough. I was in what was then West Germany, having taken an overnight train from Denmark. The original plan had been to stay in Copenhagen for a couple of days after returning from Sweden. But due to a variety of reasons – mostly financial – my friend and I decided to travel on to West Germany, where we had a free place to stay.

It was quite early in the morning when we arrived in Dortmund, but I needed to ring our future hosts to let them know that we were coming. However, the bank was closed, and I didn't have any German currency to make that local call from the payphone. As the train station was beginning to bustle with weary eyed commuters, I thought that I would ask folks, in my broken German, if I could have a few coins to make the call. I explained the circumstances, and I even showed that I had foreign funds and travellers' cheques but couldn't cash them. I even offered various forms of Scandinavian currency in my ego-saving attempts to sweeten the deal.

I tried to show that it was a bit of a short-term problem, and all would be resolved in the end...if only people would understand the particulars of my unique situation. It all sounded pretty logical to me. Yet even as I tried to demonstrate the so-called "deserving" nature of my ask, I was treated with varying degrees of scorn and contempt and, paradoxically at the same time, felt that I was under the heavy veil of some kind of temporary invisibility. Eventually someone gave me the coins. I am not sure if he listened to my story or just felt sorry for me. Anyway, I made the call and

we stayed in Dortmund for an enjoyable week.

We panhandlers all have to try and maintain a sense of dignity and agency within the shifting terrain of a truly degrading economic exchange. It was, however, a humiliating experience. One that I will never forget, neither in my memory nor viscerally in my soul. But the point I want to make is that as a society we must balance individual economic decisions, say in dealings with panhandling, ("to give or not to give, that is the question") with a recognition of the collective need for adequate and sustainable social provision. I think the British Labour politician Nye Bevan put it well when he argued that "Private charity can never be a substitute for organized justice". Panhandling, to be sure, is an extreme of private charity, indeed private enterprise, but it certainly points to the need for organized justice in the guise of transformative public policy.

Unfortunately, though, our current provincial government is fueled by an old fashioned ideology and is steadily eroding the framework for organized justice. In fact, I would suggest, that much of the poverty and other manifestations of exclusion in Alberta are due to the failure / inadequacy of existing policy systems. Minimum wage rates are ongoing targets of ideological speculation, temporary foreign workers remain in limbo, industrial legality is being impaired and the UCP government even looked at possible further reductions in the income and programmatic support for people on the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) programme. The government has already changed the monthly payment date, together with decoupling AISH from annual cost-of-living adjustments – a real reduction in income - and was looking at further measures of "efficiency" and "austerity", before it temporarily bowed down to common sense. However, the existing changes will have an impact on

the quality of life and inherent dignity of people on AISH; it will also have consequences for family caregivers, who are frequently over-worked and confronted by the challenges of individual funding models of care. It is a sad reflection on Alberta as a whole. I know it is trite to say, but a society is judged by how it treats its weakest members. By this measure, our province is failing miserably. And we seem set for – or at least steadfastly open to - even greater failure.

Now I am sure that some people on AISH could draw upon the resources of wealthier family members to meet the potential shortfall. The family is generally a major source of physical, financial, advocational and emotional support. Disability savings programmes might be of assistance for some others when their family caregivers die. There might also be a small percentage of people on AISH who are able to make up the reduction by increased levels of part-time employment. However, as AISH is designed as an income replacement programme to help support people who have significant barriers to ongoing labour market participation, this number will be necessarily low. And, to be sure, these wages will generally be less than even a living wage. What happens to the rest, including those who are estranged from their families? They will either have to rely on the vagaries of private charity, the wax fruits of Corporate Social Responsibility, the intermittent private sector interest in "ending" complex social issues, aspirational plans or, perhaps as a desperate last measure, resort to types of so-called "social disorder behaviours" including panhandling.

It will come as no surprise, however, that much of this can be avoided. Basically, we need to ensure that we maintain and expand our social safety net. Panhandlers all have different stories.

Continued on page 13

# THE SHADOW OF MY MOTHER

By Maria B

*First it was emotional, at the utmost tender years, she was nothing but a shadow but at the age of six years old She decided to walk away from our lives, leaving us in such incredible despair as we needed her so much.*

*Mother of mine, the biggest piece missing in my soul is the true essence of your presence in my life*

*Mother of mine, how I wish even once I could have a slight memory of how it feels to have your tender touch caress my face like a soft wind*

*Mother of mine how I wish I would have received a loving look from your beautiful eyes that would have been like a soft touch of a sun ray.*

*Mother of mine how I wish even once I would have heard the murmur of your soft voice uttering the "I love you", your words would have served as the mantle of protection and would have given me the feeling of belonging and self worth that I badly needed.*

*Mother of mine how I wish you could have been present when I accomplished something great  
And your face would have lightened up with pride*

*Mother of mine you are the biggest piece missing in my life and a part of me will always long for your love. I have needed you all my life.*

*We must rise above and become the kind of mothers that children badly need; they need our strength, compassion, guidance and most of all our unconditional love and commitment. We also have to recognize that when women have been going through childhood trauma even if they want to, they are unable to be the kind of mothers that they need to be in order to have emotionally healthy children. We must break the cycle and bring into awareness how physical, verbal and emotional abuse affect women and children in every spectrum of their lives and we are doing so little to stop and change this toxic & vicious family system. Reading the words "Stop the violence" is just lip service; we need committed actions in order to see results.*



Continued from page 12

Not all of these stories sit easily with people. But we all need something at some time for some reason or another. And an adequately funded, responsive and effective social welfare state, funded by progressive taxation, is the best and most compassionate way to collectively respond and promote belonging. As I have said before, taxes are neither good nor bad, they are simply a way to pay for the type of society we hope for, need and desire. That being the case, we require, for example, higher personal income taxes for those of us who can afford it. I know this will not be popular in some

circles – particularly with the bourgeois cool; but it is the price of democracy and is necessary for the creation and maintenance of a basic foundation of social rights of citizenship. It is a cost I am certainly willing to pay.

Nelson Mandela noted that “Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is a protection of a fundamental human right, the right of dignity and a decent life”.

I certainly don't want to put my panhandling experience up against those inspiring words. I was a privileged graduate student travelling around Europe instead of working on

my thesis. My reliance on the utterly charitable response of others was fleeting. But thirty years on, I can still feel the humiliation. It sits in the memory of my body. I am sure the people panhandling outside of Shoppers' Drug Mart and on the busy intersection of Southland Drive and Macleod Trail feel the same. It doesn't have to be that way. Dignity and effectiveness can be achieved. All we need is patience and a collective political will to act. In my mind, organized justice – through the application of the diverse instruments of public policy – is always preferable to the private calculus of charity.

# Fire

By Linda Dumont

Four a.m. July 18 my daughter, Naomi, who was sleeping in a second floor bedroom, came downstairs and said, "There's a fire in the house."

I was in my office working on some stuff on the computer, and my other daughter, Angelique, was asleep in her room on the main floor. I opened the basement door, and all I could see was smoke.

While Naomi called the fire department, I went to the staircase to rescue the cats from upstairs, but the smoke was so thick I could see nothing. My cat, Serenity, came running when I called but the other three hid. I decided to wait for the fire men to rescue them.

The fire department told us to go outside, so we did. I put Serenity, in the car. Once the firemen arrived, they made repeated trips upstairs to rescue three more cats. When they attempted to get the last of the cats, the stairs gave way and the fireman plummeted to the basement stairs beneath. Luckily he was not hurt. They put a ladder over the collapsed stairs, and finally all the pets were safe and waiting in the car. The dove was wheeled into the back yard, still in his cage, and I put him in the tool shed and locked the door to keep him safe.

I had grabbed my purse and cell phone on the way out, as had my daughters. Out in the fire van, the fire chief called my insurance company on my behalf. They said to check into a hotel, and the fire insurance would cover the cost. My daughters were in their night clothes, so they were each given a white flannel blanket with blue strips at each end. I had grabbed my jacket from my office to put over my night wear.

Finding a hotel that accepted pets wasn't too hard, except they only allowed two cats per room, so we had to book two hotel rooms at the Holiday Inn Express, one for me and one for

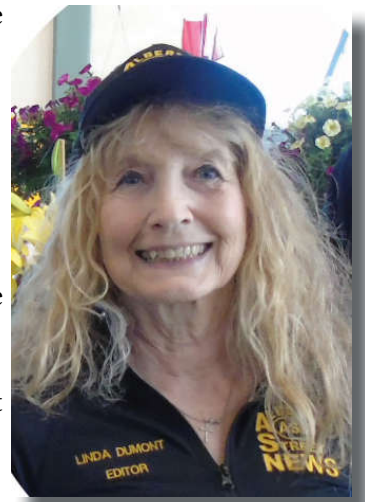
my daughters. It was a very long day because the hotel check in time wasn't until 3 p.m. and we had a car full with all the cats. Four cats on three floors in a five bedroom house don't seem as much as four cats in a small Ford Fiesta with three people. Once the pet stores opened at 10 a.m. we bought carrying cases to make them more manageable, as well as food, but the car was starting to smell horribly. Finally my son came to help. He took Angelique and Naomi in his car so it was just me and the cats in the stinky car.

Finally, we got checked into the hotel, and my daughter, Angelique, ordered supper for everyone on Skip the Dish. Ironically, it was Naomi's birthday, so we celebrated with Tony Roma's ribs and a red velvet cake. I had grabbed the bag that contained her birthday presents from my office, which hardly smelled of smoke at all because the door had been shut, I gave her the black hoody and a black zig zag hemmed blouse, so she was able to change from her pyjamas. Angelique and I were still walking around in our sleep wear, but I had a summer coat over and she covered her night gown with a big scarf.

The next day, I went back to the house and rescued a few clothes that had been in the office, my computer and printer. I couldn't go upstairs because the staircase had a big hole, and my clothing in the basement was black with smoke. But I had a pair of jeans, a black Lululemon jacket, a T shirt and some print leggings in the office, so I picked those up, and wore that for the next week. My daughters had to go shopping to buy a few outfits.

Once settled in the hotel, we had to find a place to rent. The insurance company would pay for it, but it was difficult to find a landlord that would accept us with all of the pets. Finally Angelique found a duplex in Thorsby, and when I went to see it, we were accepted as tenants. I moved in first, after a two week stay at the hotel. I had picked up some dishes and cutlery, the electric kettle and two pots

from the house, and had a air mattress and one of the blankets from the night of the fire. The next day, I rescued the bird



from his home in the shed as well as the house plants from the kitchen. There were also some upstairs but I couldn't get to those.

We needed to replace the smoke damaged beds so we went shopping to get beds for Angelique and Naomi. The fire insurance would pay replacement costs but that would take time. Once the beds were delivered to the duplex, Angelique and Naomi were able to move in with their two cats.

The fire insurance company began removing restorable items from the house, clearing room after room. They had the broken stairs replaced. I was told to pick up some of my clothes so they could try to restore them, so I went in to get three pairs of jeans and four t-shirts, underwear and leggings. The adjuster took them away and brought them back clean, but she said there was a chemical smell so my clothing was not restorable. Everything that was restorable was taken to be cleaned and then stored in their big warehouse

Then came the hard part- all that they left behind was not restorable so they brought in a dump truck, and once everything was photographed and listed, proceeded to throw things away. My stuff in my den in the basement was all badly burned, and the other things from downstairs were nearly all thrown out. I took an end able to the duplex, and it smelled so badly of smoke that I had to repaint it with wood stain on all side. The appliances were all dumped as were

# A Gift Basket of Christmas Thoughts

By Joanne Bengner

1. I hear the gingerbread makes his bed with cookie sheets.
2. How do you spell Noel? Abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
3. Happy Holly Daze. Have a Santamental Christmas. Bling in the holidays.
4. Santa Claus, cat claws, legal clauses, Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.
5. 'Tis the season to overeat. Wear a sensibly adjustable belt.
6. If a pet swallows Christmas tree decorations, does he get tinsilitis?
- 7 Rule of Yule – no gift bag should cost more than the gift costs.
8. Rudolf the red knows rain, dear. Who's the dear? Maybe that's why Olive, the other reindeer, teased him.
9. Dick the horse with bows of holly. Fa-la-la—la-la—la.
10. Guess what I found in my stocking? Somebody's foot.
11. Does Christmas Adam occur before Christmas Eve?
12. How does Santa climb back up the chimney?
13. Plum pudding contains no plums, hard sauce isn't hard, and shortbreads are neither short nor a bread.
14. When we trim a hedge we lop bits off the top but when we trim a Christmas tree we add onto it.
15. Is the opposite of getting presents getting pasts.
16. When you dress the turkey you remove the feathers literally undressing it.
17. Santa arrives just in the St. Nick of Christmas eve and the next day he is a tired beat Nick.
18. The Christmas triathalon consists of TV, table, bed.
19. A Christmas hangover should be called an egg noggin.
20. If it was Christmas every day it would never be Christmas.
21. This year presents have to take the place of your presence.

all the sheets, blankets, towels, and anything made from cloth as well as all the yoga mats and equipment I had stored in the basement..

While we were going through the things, I did rescue a few more items to restore myself. I should have rescued even more. My writing and photographs were stored in big plastic bins so those were taken to the warehouse and my paintings, that were upstairs, were also taken to have the smoke smell removed. But my daughters lost a lot of Anime items they had purchased in Japan – cloth wall hangings, bags, purses, and clothing. And my late husbands t-shirts and leather jacket went as well.

The insurance company will be paying for contents, but some things are irreplaceable, like the snow shoes I bought when I was a 19 year old school teacher in the NW T, or my painting of the Angel of the Forest. Fortunately I had it photographed to make cards and prints, but that is not the same. Most of my art supplies burnt right up – about 40 tubes

of pant, oil pastels and brushes, so I haven't painted since the fire.

The insurance company is working on the house. They have taken down all the walls and it is just a skeleton house. Unfortunately since it was built in 1926, there are many things that are not up to code, like the old wiring. The walls were slats with plaster and no insulation, and some of the ceilings and floors contained asbestos that they removed.

For now, we wait. My daughters and I are living in our temporary home, making do with what we have. I did have to get a microwave, and they needed new winter coats. It is a bit inconvenient at times. My desk is in storage so I sit on the floor with my computer on a cardboard box to type. We do have a TV. and a young man, who was a co-worker at The Mission Hall where I used to volunteer, gave me a toaster, a coffee maker, some towels and a men's winter coat that I am wearing.

We carry on and I am starting to get more work teaching some group

exercise classes as the COVID-19 restrictions lift. That's good as the CERB money is ended, and EI will be ending as well after 26 weeks.

If the insurance company goes ahead with renovations I will have a new home, but there will probably be some renovations I will have to cover myself. I purchased the house through the Central Edmonton Community Land Trust in 2012. They sold older renovated houses rent to own to low income families. I only had to pay 60% of market value when I got ownership of the house.

The land trust had purchased and renovated 17 houses and of the renters, 15 of the families were able to transition to becoming home owners. Once that was accomplished, the land trust was disbanded.

# Invalidation caused by child abuse

By Maria B.

Growing up in an environment where the child abuse that we received was completely invalidated even by our sibling trying to manipulate and put a spin on the actions of our parents formed a place where we ceased to believe our recollections in order to accept what other people were trying to make us believe. This took us into a participation of creating shadows, the kind of shadows that fervently follow us and create feelings of incredible fear. We find ourselves lacking trust in our feelings also, so instead we develop shame and guilt feelings blaming ourselves for everything that happened to us. By doing this we carry incredible burdens because suddenly the abuse has become our fault and suddenly we have become the source of the abuse instead of the perpetrators that had the power to abuse us in despicable forms.

People state that in order to heal, we have to forgive. Forgive who? The perpetrator or ourselves for all the abuse we cause to ourselves? This is completely ludicrous.

Before I could forgive my parents, I had to understand where they came from, what kind of upbringing they came from and to realize that the abuse that I received, I did not deserve as I was an innocent child learning how to survive in such a cruel world.

After being able to forgive them for the incredible pain they caused in my life, I had to forgive myself for believing that I

was the source of my pain.

I have been able to honour the memories that come into my head describing what happened but also allowing my feelings that were trapped in the darkness of exclusion to come into the light and express themselves.

Doing this has been an incredibly liberating experience for me and I am welcoming every memory and every feeling that comes attached to that experience.

One thing that is incredibly irreconcilable is the fear that I recognize having since I was very little; even pictures were able to capture the fear that kept me trapped. For this I can only assume that the treatment that I received from my father when I was not aware of what was going on was not deciphered through words but actions against me as an innocent child. I refused to claim my fault for crying too much or something incoherent like that. I appreciate that when I was born I was a gift to the world. It is sad that the feelings I had were of incredible fear instead of feelings of love?

As children's actions leave an imprint in our memory and in our heart. This does not mean that we wanted to have perfect parents but the reality in my life is that I needed more loving parents.

Now I am able to understand that parents that did not have displays of love from their parents, can not give what they themselves did not have.

And yet through all these years, I wish I could remember a kind gesture, a sign



of love that my parents could have had for me? And unfortunately my memory stock on love is completely empty.

We can live our life longing for even a loving sign from our parents and maybe my loyal friend "fear" impeded me from being able to see those signs. Talking to my sibling and expecting some mention of this would not be credible as they would be able to confuse the signs of love they were able to see and feel and include me also, but this is not the same.

I also think of our two younger siblings, who faced the abandonment of my parents when they were so little, about two and four. Sadness take over me encapsulating my feelings of the abandonment that we suffered, realizing how incredibly broken we were and how our childhood was stolen from us through the actions of our parents.

Through all of this we have been able to rise and become incredible human beings.

I AM INCREDIBLY PROUD OF WHO I AM

## OPINION

### Why Are the Homeless Terrorized In Our Country?

By Rodney Graham

.....To keep them manageable and in shock. The reason is that they don't want to help them too much - they want to keep them in the gutter - in misery. That way they are easily manageable and in a state of shock. They are actually criminally harassed as a matter of practice in America and in Canada - by store managers, police, private security and members of the public.

The reason why is shocking too - the business communities

everywhere lobby very hard to city halls to keep them down and out - If they were helped, they might be more mobile and noticeable. If they were to become mobile and noticeable, they would cause 'great concern' to the public who are very easily disturbed by anyone who looks poor - the poor make people uncomfortable... they scare the daylight out of the 'good citizens' - the consumer. And in our twisted society, the governors and authorities are mandated to never allow the consumers to be made uncomfortable. The police, security, and bureaucrats know this very well because they talk to business owners and the snotty public everyday about it - they are falsely accused - the homeless are ratted on daily in every town and city in our wonderful democracy.