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Artist Daryl Gautier works on a painting at the Seeds of Hope art night. Paintings by the group will be on display at the Woodcroft Library from January 16 until the March 27. Story on Page 16

ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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Low Income Seniors in need

By Linda Dumont

The government payouts are all over – first it was the CERB payments, then Employment Insurance, and finally when that ran out the Canada Recovery Benefit. After that, nothing. No more government money due to the devastating effects of COVID 19 for people who lost employment. While some people were able to return to work as things began to open up, other jobs have been lost. Low income seniors, who were employed, have been hit hardest.

Enid, a senior who was employed as a telemarketer with the Diabetes Foundation, is now struggling to make her rent payments each month. The extra income from CERB and Employment Insurance increased her total income for 2020 enough so that she no longer receives the guaranteed income supplement (GIS) for seniors as of July 2021. All pandemic related money ended in September. With no employment, she is left with just \$1000 a month from Old Age security (pension) and Canada pension, and her monthly rent is \$1000. She cannot return to work as the job she had no longer exists.

My job, too has been drastically reduced so I work about one quarter



as many hours as I did before the pandemic and, like Eva, I no longer qualify for any GIS.

Canada wide almost 90,000 seniors are hit by the cut to their monthly income because they received federal financial benefits to help them weather the pandemic. Since July, their guaranteed income supplements have been clawed back, leaving low income seniors in need.

The Canadian government is talking about giving back GIS, to poor seniors but as yet it could be a while, and it may be just another of their one time payments of \$500 in the spring.

Correction in November/December ASN

In the previous Bi-monthly 2021 Alberta Street News November/December Volume 17-issue-11/12, a story was published, headlined 2021 Fall Fun Golf Classic raises \$92,000 for the MMM's Adopt a Family Christmas Campaign. The fundraising event was held on Sunday September 12th at 2 p.m. at the Goose Hummock Golf resort a few miles north of Gibbons Alberta.

That amount raised in the headline was incorrect. The headline should have correctly read, 2021 Fall Fun Golf Classic raises over \$9,200 for the MMM's Adopt a Family Christmas Campaign. Alberta Street News would like to apologize to the hosts for any inconvenience that this may have caused to the success of this important fundraising event.

THE VIEWS PRESENTED ARE THOSE OF THE CONTRIBUTORS.

January, The Door to New Beginnings

By Joanne Benger

It is January, a time of old endings and new beginnings as Janus, the Roman two faced god looked behind at the last year with one face and ahead at the next year with his other face. He was the god of beginnings, doors, sunrises and sunsets. In the past people had masquerade parties on New Year's Eve and didn't reveal their identities until midnight. It is a time for champagne, Times Square, watching the ball drop on television, counting down, kissing and singing Auld Lange Syne. On the serious side there are resolutions and new calendars and January is Alzheimer's Awareness month as well as Hot Tea Month.

Jan. 1 is New Year's Day and there is the wind to observe. North wind – bad weather, south wind- fine weather and prosperous times. East wind – famine and other calamities, west wind – plentiful food but an important person will die. No wind – a prosperous joyful year ahead for all.

January 3 is Drinking Straw Day and January 4 is National Trivia Day as well as Spaghetti Day.

January 5 is National Bird Day, when we end our Christmas bird counts. The Christmas season had officially ended.

January 6 is Epiphany when people traditionally take down the tree and clear away all the debris of the Christmas season. It is also Ukrainian Christmas Eve with twelve meatless dishes

January 7 is Ukrainian Christmas Day. Hay is often put under the table to symbolize the manger where Jesus was born.

January 8 is National Manwatcher's Day, followed by January 11 which is National Girl Hugs Boy Day as well as National Hot Toddy Day. Enjoy.

January 9 is St. Distaff's Day, Partly work and partly play. Ye must on St. Distaff's Day. It is also Pharmacists Day so visit your local drug store today.

January 13 is St. Hilary's Day, which means all Advent restrictions are over as well as Ukrainian New Years Eve. Celebrate.

January 14 wear a fancy toque.

January 16 marks the anniversary of United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. We must fight wrongs and right wrongs. This is followed by Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the U.S. on January 18.

January 17 is Tu B'shavot, the New Year for Trees. Happy New Year to trees everywhere. It is also full moon, the Snow Moon or Cold Moon.

January 18 is Winnie the Pooh Day followed by Popcorn Day on January 19. Let your inner child come to and play.

January 20 is Cheese Day as well as St. Agnes Day. If you want to see who you will marry, fast all day, then eat a supper of stale bread and parsley tea before going to bed. You should dream of your future spouse.

January 23 is Handwriting Day. Rediscover a lost art and mail a hand written letter. Follow up with a phone call on January 28 Bell Let's Talk Day. Remember a kind word warms three winter months.

January 25 is Robert Burns Day. Celebrate with all things Scottish – plaids and kilts, the haggis and shortbread, Scotch whiskey and the singing of the songs of Robert Burns.

January 25 is also St. Paul's Day. If there is rain or snow on this day, a poor harvest can be expected.

January 27 is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Light a candle in memory of lives that ended too soon.

January 29 is National Puzzle Day and January 30 is Fun at Work Day. Wear your most cheerful clothes and laugh, laugh, laugh.



NOVENA - Mother Theresa - Say nine Hail Mary's for nine days. Ask for three wishes, first

for business, second and third for the impossible. Publish this article on the ninth day. Your

wishes will come true even- through you may not believe it. Amazing, but true. J.B.

...Absolutely nothing!

By Timothy Wild

The song War, written by Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong, has been performed by a range of artists including The Temptations (who were the first to record the piece), The Jam and Bruce Springsteen. But I think that the best version is Edwin Starr's rendition. It has energy, passion and rawness, and graphically voices a simple and abiding truth: "War, what is it good for? Absolutely nothing!"

I was humming the song recently and started thinking about current political, social, and environmental relations of production. I appreciate the song for its simplicity and the resonance of the message – a manifestation of simplicity and resonance that is all too often lacking in politics today. I think a large part of this absence, or perhaps wilful ignorance, is related to the modern liberal quest of wanting to appear hip, liberated and progressive while, at the same time, ensuring that the much needed transformative and structural change is either significantly watered down or doesn't happen at all. This is the curse of the "bourgeois cool", folks who have a vague feeling that all is not right but are too afraid to look at issues critically lest they be forced to address root causes and give up elements of their privilege. Succor is gladly chosen over justice.

We can see this especially in the liberal notion of "aspirational goals." Unlike short- or medium-term goals (which can and should be measurable and provide both transparency and accountability), these long-term goals will not actually happen. Quite Orwellian actually. Ultimately, they are put in place to reflect the vested interests of the dominant power elite and to act as a brake upon actual structural change. To me, aspirational goals are a significant problem. Channeling Whitfield and Strong, then, "Aspirational goals, what are they good for? Absolutely nothing!"

For example, there were a number of aspirational goals announced at the recent COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow. In fact, I would argue

that there were more aspirational goals than concrete action. In addition to the Dadaist buffoonery of Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and Tony Blair talking about the need to act now to save the planet for human inhabitation (when they didn't act decisively whilst in office), we also witnessed the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, saying that his country would be carbon neutral in the next fifty years. Do we even have that long? I think the aspirational pledges made for 2050 by other countries are far too late. Also, who is going to hold those general pledges to account in the 2050s, let alone the 2070s? Some of the low lying islands in the Pacific are already threatened with being underwater because of climate change. Climate change is wreaking havoc on global weather patterns. And the issue of global migration – due to the various issues of environmental degradation – will have an impact on security, peace, collective wellbeing, and social justice across the planet. We don't need aspirations to solve the climate problem. We need action and we need it now.

Then, on the national stage, CBC ran a story related to the dismal progress on the 1989 all-party, unanimous pledge by MPs in the House of Commons to end child poverty by the year 2000. A couple of points need to be made here. First, there are very few children who are independently poor. They tend to belong to families in poverty, and the feminization of poverty plays a significant role, as does the intersection of race and class. Secondly, despite the undoubtedly good intentions of those MPs, child poverty continues apace, well beyond the aspiration of the year 2000. According to Leila Sarangi, the National Director of Campaign 2000, 17.3% of Canadian young people are living below the poverty line, and it will take 54 years for child poverty to be eradicated if the present pace of programming and funding continues at the current level. Maybe just in time to see if India met its zero-carbon pledge? More locally, we can also see aspirations at play in plans to end homelessness in Alberta. Ten-year plans, for example, enjoyed a certain faddish appeal across our province. These plans were not designed to merely reduce homelessness but were based on the premise of ending homelessness. A point clearly made by the then Roman Catholic Bishop of

Calgary, Fred Henry. Representatives of Calgary's business sector came together to show the not-for profit sector how the application of business "know how" could solve a massive social problem that had been troubling people at the levels of both conscience and cost for so long.

But, guess what? The problem wasn't that simple, and despite the provision of some affordable housing and application of a solid "housing first" policy, the social problem of homelessness continues to be a major issue in our province's cities. Homelessness is more than simply a lack of housing; it is an issue that is bound up with a complex, individual mix of variables including mental illness, brain injury, domestic violence, low wages, demolition of Single Room Occupancy Hotels, physical injuries, barriers to employment, labour market ageism and addiction. So, coming full circle, ten-year plans to end homelessness were based on aspirations to end homelessness rather than a concrete plan to end homelessness. Shelters remain full and more funds have been set aside by the Provincial Government to help municipalities for winter responses.

The above three examples – climate change, child poverty and homelessness – demonstrate the downside of aspirational goals. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that the goals themselves are wrong. I think we need to act to ensure human survival on Earth, (child) poverty can and should be eliminated as soon as possible, and every person, not matter what they have done or who they are, should enjoy a social minimum when it comes to basics, including shelter. What I am opposed to is the so-called aspirational nature of responses. At root, I believe that aspirational goals buy time, draw upon stores of good will and, ultimately, delay action. These goals can assuage the conscience of the middle classes, and do not require too much action. They simply act as a brake upon much needed transformative change. Ultimately, they ensure that people continue to live in unacceptable conditions, globally, nationally and in Alberta. I'll say it again, "Aspirational goals, what are they good for? Absolutely nothing!"

Blair O'Neil Badger

April 1, 1979 - October 15, 2021

On Friday, October 15, 2021 Blair O'Neil Badger of Kehewin pass away suddenly at the age of 42 years. Blair will be forever remembered by his spouse; Cecile Dion, his children; Hieron, Blair Jr., Laesen, Zowie, Chez, and Brayden Badger, grandsons; Anglo and D'Andre, his parents; Richard (Joanne) Badger and Darelene Collins, his siblings; Cher Badger, Shayna Badger, Chando Jackson, Maegan Jackson and Karyley Badger, Steven Cardinal, his maternal great grandfather; Tootis Collins and numerous nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, relatives and friends.

Blair was predeceased by his maternal great grandmother; Mary Collins and his paternal grandparents; Thomas and Angelina Badger.

Blair's mother, Darlene Collins, is an Alberta Street News writer and vendor.

My son was killed

By Darlene Collins

My son Blair was killed back on the reserve six weeks ago. The RCMP in that town of Bonnyville mistook him and his children for a car full of drunks and hit him on his right bumper My son died instantly and his children got hurt. I am still so devastated.

And to top it all off my daughter Cheryl Badger is missing. She might be dead. I don't know. I finally got the police to help me. I ended up having a heart attack and there are still people stalking me because I know too much. As everybody knows there is a prostitution ring of young women, mostly First Nations, in the basement of Operation Friendship. The police know and are doing nothing to stop these people probably because of they are partaking in this awful crime. I have been a victim of crime for the past five years and these people won't leave me alone.

Isn't it enough that my two children are gone?



Some Winter Riddles

By Joanne Bengier

1. How do you greet someone you didn't see New Years Eve? A. I haven't seen you since last year.
2. How do you keep your teeth from chattering on a cold winter day? Put them in your pocket.
3. What Scotch key won't open a door? Whiskey.
4. Why wouldn't the ground hog share his burrow He was a hog.
5. What do you call a ground hog? Pork sausage.
6. Why can't the groundhog fly? He is a ground hog not a

sky hog.

7. Why did the groundhog avoid the Hell's Angels? He heard they rode hogs.
8. Why did the romantic butcher give his girlfriend two pork cutlets labelled NEAT and MEAT? He heard she liked rhyming couplets.
9. What did the deer call his sweetheart on Valentine's Day? Dear.
10. Why did the lover shower his girlfriend with almonds and filberts? He was nuts about her.

Pay attention to what you hear

By Darlene Collins

As I skimmed through the pages with the lines all empty I came to the conclusion that I need to fill those lines and so can you. I didn't know how to write and I learned with persistence. So can you. Remember today, time and record every time there's another chapter in your book.

Then let it all flow out and write. It doesn't matter if it's one word, one sentence one page or one book. Just let it flow and write. It will all make sense when it's time for you to start writing. You'll find that the supplies to just write will always take care of itself. Hi Hi and Thanks, Darlene Collins

It is awful to fight this hate crime. All the guys at the back of the place make fun of all the women who walk by. All the guys go into the kitchen door – for what? And to boot my daughter is one of the prostitutes involved. Oh, I forgot you moved. Anyways I haven't seen my kid for a while and I believe a new girl has b

The woman and her dog

By Darlene Collins

There was a time when only the Operation Friendship was around, then one day there were homes going up and their houses built along 106 Avenue. This lady who has a big dog with polka dots on it, has been teaching her dog to "Go bite her" or "Go bite him". She also walks her two children around putting down people. How dare she! She's no better than the ground we walk on. Piss me off and I'll eliminate the mutt myself.



Temporary shelters open for the winter

By Linda Dumont

The City of Edmonton has opened two temporary shelters for the homeless during the cold winter months. That will be open 24/7 until March 22nd. The shelters offer day and night sleeping accommodations, three meals a day and access to showers and hygiene items as well as access to additional services to help people transition out of the shelter system and the Boyle Street Community Services operates an overdose prevention and treatment site within the shelters to ensure the safety of the guests.

The shelter at the Commonwealth Stadium west concession area is operated by The Mustard Seed and can shelter 200 people.

The shelter at the Spectrum Building on former Edmonton Exhibition grounds is operated by Hope Mission and can shelter 200 people.

The two city owned buildings have been leased to provincially funded shelter operations until March 22.

It's a Snow Day

By Joanne Bengert

It's a snow day
 a no show day
 a stay home day
 a don't roam day
 a procrastination day
 a snowcrashination day
 a hyperthermia day
 a hyperstormia day,
 a blizzard day
 a freeze your gizzard day
 a wear your toque to bed day
 a your nose is red day
 a wheezy day
 a sneezy day
 a Gesundheit day
 a don't feel right day
 a Tylenol day
 to lie in all day

Celebrating the 25th of Scotland

By Joanne Benger

January 25 is Robert Burns birthday. Wee Rabbie, as they called him, was born near Ayr, Scotland on January 35, 1759 and he grew up to become the ploughman poet that was honoured as Scotland's Poet Laureate.

Many people celebrate by acting Scottish for the day. Yes, Scottish is the term most natives of Scotland now use when referring to themselves. Robert Burns referred to himself and his fellow country men as Scots when he wrote, "Scots, Wae Hae" with the lines, "Scots wae hae wi Wallace bed, Scots wham Bruce has aften led." The words Scotch, Scotchman, Scot, Scotsman and Scottish all mean native or inhabitant of Scotland and can be used to describe its people although Scotch is most often used for food products such as Scotch whisky – only foreigners spell it whiskey, Scotch shortbread and famous Scotch breakfast.

The word scot as in scot free and scotch as in scotch the rumour are unrelated to Scotland. Scotch can also be a notch as in Shakespeare's MacBeth – "We have scotched the snake, not killed it." Hopscotch gets its name because the lines are scratched or scotched into the ground. A scotch is also a wedge that is used to

keep a vehicle from moving.

Dressing up for Burns Day Night is easy. Wear a kilt or anything plaid or tartan, Scottish military men often wear plaid trousers as well as kilts. Or dress as a ploughman in honour of the ploughman poet. Wear dark trousers with a dark open vest over a light coloured shirt with sleeves rolled up to the elbows. Then add the badge of the ploughman, nickietams, by wrapping a leather strap around each trouser leg just below the knee to keep the trouser bottoms up out of the mud.

On Burns Night "braw, fine whisky – suppin' Hieland men" gather in his honour. The star of Burns Night is, of course, the haggis. It is piped in, held shoulder high. Then it is skewered and served with Scotch whisky plus neeps and tatties – parsnips and turnips, and potatoes. Begin the meal with the Selkirk Grace written by Robert Burns – "Some have meat and cannot eat. Some cannot eat that want it. But we have meat and we can eat. Sae let the Lord by thankit." There are many toasts. "May fools graw wise and knaves graw honest." "Here's to us! Who's like us? De'il a one." "Here's to us. Who like us? Gey few and they're all dead." After the meal is eaten the party begins. The Scottish reel is danced. It is a fast, lively folk dance. Songs are sung, including the old tunes that the ploughman himself would have sung that were written by him like Auld Lang Syne, Coming Through the Rye and Flow Gently Sweet

Afton.

Many choose to celebrate Burns Day alone or with close friends for he had a kinder gentler side as well. He wrote "Nature's Law. The man was made to mourn." And "Naeboddy cares for me. I care for naeboddy." Some of his finest poetry was written for Highland Mary, his first love, the daughter of a sailor. She died young in 1774 or 1776 when he was just a teenager. Mary inspired "The Highland Lassie", "Highland Mary", "Will ye Go to the Indies, My Mary?" and "To Mary in Heaven". In "Flow Gently Sweet Afton" we see him mourning her, "My Mary's asleep by the murmuring stream. Flow gently Sweet Afton, disturb not her dream"

No matter how you celebrate Burns Day or Burns Night, thank you for honouring Robert Burns. And now we end the day by bestowing the Scottish blessing upon you.

Scottish Blessing

May the best ye've ever seen be the worst ye'll ever see,
May a mouse ne'er leave your gurnal wi' a tear drape in his e'e,
May ye aye keep hale and he'rty till ye're auld enough tae die,
May ye aye be just as happy as I wish ye tae be.

Valentine thoughts garnered by eaves-dropping

By Joanne Benger

1. I hear he finally found someone worthy of his love – himself.
2. I would die for my true love but I can't for mine is an undying love.
3. If he is so handsome why do you close your eyes when you kiss him.
4. His kisses are salty because he is the salt of the earth.
5. How could you dream of leaving him? By car, bus, train or plane.
6. I think the perfect pillow would be the one next to him.
7. If he leaves me I will have chocolate. If all else fails I will eat.

Valentine lovers

By Joanne Benger

- Arthritic man – My arms aches to hold you.
- Biker – I wheelie love you.
- Roughneck – Oil love you forever.
- Carpenter – You make my heart hammer.
- Gardener – My heart beets for you.
- Astronaut – I'll love you to the moon and back.
- Electrician – We have that spark.
- Mechanic – You auto be my wife.
- Pilot – Come fly away with me,
- Baseball player – Our love is a home run.
- Bird watcher – Owl always love you.
- Rocker – You make my heart sing.

The Dance of The Rabbits

By Sharon Austin

Glancing at the huge silver digital clock on the office wall Jim saw it was 4:32. Relieved that the work day was almost over he stretched his arms and closed his eyes against the blue glare of the computer screen. He opened his eyes to see his co-worker Noreen standing next to his office cubical holding a notepad and tapping her foot.

"Have you decided if you're going with the rest of us to the mountains?" she asked expectantly. They had gone out for dinner a few times but they weren't actually dating. At the look of indecision on his face she quickly added, "If you're not going, I want you to know I'll be going with someone else." Noreen stared at him, trying to gauge his reaction to her statement but there was none.

"No," Jim told her, "I've decided to pass this time. I'm trying to figure out if this tech job is what I really want. I need some time to think."

Noreen rounded on him angrily, "Ever since you went home for Christmas you haven't been the same. You've got a great job, a nice apartment, a new car; and good friends here at work. What else could you want! Surely you don't want to go back to that hick town on the coast and fish lobster all day."

After Noreen marched away, Jim pondered what she had said. Going home made him realize how much he missed living on the coast. He missed the moist salt sea spray and the roar of the surf lapping against the rocks. He missed the taste of fresh lobster dipped in butter and his mother's seafood chowder. Jim's father was a lobster- fishermen who had quit school to work on the boats. He now made a good living with his own lobster boat and lobster license and Jim's two older brothers as crew. Jim knew all about lobster fishing, too, as he had worked with them when he wasn't in school but his dream had always been to become a marine biologist. He didn't want to just

harvest the ocean, he wanted to learn all he could about the vast ocean waters and the creatures that called it home. Marine conservation and preserving of ocean ecosystems were very important to him.

At first, his father had been angry that he wanted to pursue an education instead of working on the boat but in time he had grudgingly admitted that he was proud to have one scholar in the family. Then came the great summer job at a tech company that had derailed his plans. Instead of going back to college, he had continued working and climbing the ladder of success. Sighing, Jim turned off the computer and rose to leave. Rather than going to the mountains he was heading to the remote cabin of an old family friend to think about his future.

Three hours later, Jim was deeply regretting going to the cabin. First, he had trouble even finding the place on the narrow winding road deep in the forest. Now, the cabin was freezing and blue with smoke because the wood stove refused to burn properly. The coffee in his thermos was barely lukewarm and there was no way to heat the soup he had brought. Huddled under his sleeping bag eating a cold sandwich and drinking stale coffee was not what he had imagined. He had made up his mind. First thing in the morning he was leaving this place and embracing his city life.

Sometime during the night, he was awakened by a bright light shining in the bedroom window. Rising, he looked out at the trees gleaming in the moonlight and a sky filled with thousands of stars. Suddenly a movement caught his eye in the small clearing beneath the trees. A large group of Eastern Cottontail rabbits were leaping and dancing in the moonlight; their grey-brown coats frosted with silver. Leaping high they suddenly kicked sideways circling in a strange courtship dance. Suddenly a memory flooded his mind and he was again that ten- year- old boy standing in his mother's kitchen. He remembered Jeb, the old hermit who lived in the woods, and the strange tale he had told. Jeb had come for coffee as he usually did but this morning his

eyes seemed lit with an inner glow. I've seen a strange and marvelous sight," he declared. "Last night I saw a host of rabbits dancing in a circle in the moonlight. They were leaping high and shadow boxing and circling all around."

Father had thrown back his head and laughed. "Don't be so foolish old man," father had roared. "Next thing you know you'll be seeing little green men. Remember what happened to old man Rossman. He saw the devil in his kitchen and the next day the cops carted him off to the loonie bin."

Old Jeb was greatly affronted and rose to leave but mother stopped him. After father had gone out, she told him gently, "I believe you Jeb, in fact the dance of the Eastern Cottontail Rabbit is a common theme in indigenous folklore. You must be very special to have been chosen to see this rare and beautiful sight." Unlike his father, his mother had a good education and had been the local school teacher. His father knew all about the tides, running the fishing boat in all kinds of weather, and the price of lobster but he had little interest in the world beyond the harbour.

"Seeing the rabbits dancing in the moonlight made me realize there's some things in my life I have to change," old Jeb said earnestly. "There's folks I need to forgive and harbour history I need to write about. Most of all I need to finish that sailboat I've been working on for 40 years."

"Why Jeb," mother had smiled at him, "I believe you've had an epiphany."

"What's an epiphany," Jim had asked.

"An epiphany is a sudden moment of revelation and insight. Suddenly you have enlightenment and a clear path before you."

Now, watching the silver rabbits dancing and leaping in the moonlight, Jim knew what he had to do. He was going back to college to finish his education and become a marine biologist. It wasn't too late to follow his dreams. As suddenly as they had come, the rabbits bowed and melted into the shadow of the dark forest and the moonlight illuminated only the silent clearing. Jim bowed his head to give thanks for the wonderful vision that he had seen and the inspiration that filled his heart.

February, Month of Love, Kindness and Forgiveness

By Joanne Benger

It is now February, a kind month that got its name from Februa, the Roman festival of forgiveness. February is to winter as Wednesday is to the week and some say we have February so we will appreciate March. February is Heart month, Friendship Month, Psychology month, Apple Month, Embroidery Month, Black History Month and Adopt a Rabbit Month. The first week of February is Eating Disorder Awareness Week, White Cane Week and National Poutine Week.

February 1 is Chinese New Year. We are entering the Year of the tiger. It is also Robinson Crusoe Day. He is the sailor who was shipwrecked and lived alone on an uninhabited island for many years. Just thinking of him made living in isolation easier for many of us during the pandemic.

February 2 is Ground Hog Day, also known as Imboig and Candlemas. As far back as the Roman conquest, Germans believed that if there was enough sun for any animal to cast a shadow, six weeks of winter lay ahead. 'If Candlemas be fair and bright, Come Winter, have another fight. If Candlemas brings clouds and rain, Go Winter and come not again.' If the groundhog sees its shadow we'll have six more weeks of winter.

February 5 is St. Agatha's Day. Expect a storm for the furies make their rounds about.

February 7 is Charles Dickens Day as well as Rose Day. Give a rose or wear a rose in your lapel or hair today.

February 9 is National Pizza Day. Enjoy.

February 13 to 19, the week surrounding Valentine's Day is Random Act of Kindness Week. Do random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty. Do something nice for yourself. Be kind to yourself and others, to the world.

February 13 is Oil and Gas Celebration Day in Alberta for crude oil was discovered in Leduc February 13, 1947.

February 14 is Valentine's Day. A magic spell will bind me fast and make me love you to the last. Let Cupid then your heart incline. To take me for your valentine. Wear red, the colour of the heart. It represents fervour and devotion.

February 15 is National Flag Day for we have had the red, white and maple leaf as our official Canadian flag since February 15, 1965.

February 16 is Full Moon, the Hunger or Raccoon Hunting Moon.

February 19 is Chocolate Mint Day and February 20 is Ember Tart Day. Indulge.

February 21 is Family Day. Do something wonderful with your family. February 21, 1975 the beaver became the official symbol of Canada and February 21 is National Mother Language Day and Love Your Pet Day.

February 22 is Girl Guides World Thinking Day when girls reflect upon the principles of honesty, sharing and making a difference in the world.

February 23 is Tortilla Chip Day as well as St. Matthias Day. Let

us hope we have bad weather for all the months of the year curse a fair Febrer.

February 25 is Pink Shirt Day. Pink Shirt Day began in Nova Scotia in 2007 when a boy was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school. It has since been recognized worldwide as a day to stand up against bullying and empower empathy. Wear your pink shirt today.

February 26 is Pistachio Day and St. Nestor's Day. He said, The incredible is often true.

February 28, the end of February is RRSP deadline. You snooze, you lose.

Happy Chinese New Year

By Joanne Benger

On February 1 it is Chinese New Years Day. We are leaving the peaceful, harmonious year of the ox, when all work together to bring good health and harmony and we are entering the exciting year of the Tiger.

Tigers can be sensitive and considerate but often they are so courageous and aggressive that they become short tempered and enter into conflict with others. Tigers are good leaders and can bring change in leaps and bounds. The tiger is most compatible with the horse, dragon or dog but should avoid the monkey and the snake.

Tigers were born in 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, and 2020 and little cubs will be born in 2022.

The tiger is the third animal in the Chinese zodiac because he is the third fastest animal in the world, beaten only by the ox and the rat. According to legend, the Jade Emperor had a race for all of the animals of the world. He promised that the first twelve to reach the finish line would have a place in the Chinese zodiac in the order in which they finished. The twelve winners of the race were, in order, Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Ram, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. The reason the Rat was first was because he had stolen a ride on the back of the ox. Then the rat leapt off the ox's back at the end of the race, making sure he crossed the finish line first.

Statues of the twelve zodiac animals can be seen in Edmonton Chinese Garden in the river front park which also has a Nine Dragon wall, a copy of the Dragon Wall found in China's Forbidden City. The original Nine Dragon Wall was erected in 1772 during the Ching Dynasty. Edmonton's wall is the biggest wall of its kind in North America – 17 meters long by five meters high. Like the original, it has reliefs on both sides with a main dragon plus four others.

The Chinese New Year celebrates spring and the coming new year with its new crops. In Edmonton, dumplings, sticky rice cakes and fish are eaten to welcome the Lunar New Year and it has often been celebrated with weekend galas, parades, line dancing, banquets and craft making. But most important of all, there are wishes for prosperity and health and gifts of money in red envelopes.

When you don't like the service go somewhere else!

By John Zapantis

How many times have you complained about arrogant and incompetent waitresses, when being served food at a restaurant table and the order kept coming back the wrong way each time you sent it back?

Believe me, I'm not the only one in the world, who has had this happen over and over by the same businesses, who finally got tired of me and finally gave me my pre-warning, by getting their waitresses to tell me, "When you don't like the service, go somewhere else."

My answer to them, 'Go back to waitressing school and find one that will teach you to get it right, when it comes to a bad attitude and learning again the proper fundamentals of class waitressing.'

Well this time, I'd like to share a story about my long-term relationship with my private tax specialist, who I'd rely on every year to prepare my income tax. This year I had to have that sent to Service Canada in order to receive my GIS and Old Age Security and Alberta Seniors Benefits, for the first time since turning 65 back in March of 2021.

This started to become an eye sore of an issue, when I first started doing business with this single family lady, who worked two jobs, one of them as a tax specialist for over 10 years, as a way of supporting her children. Despite her overcharging me a higher rate than other rival tax specialists in doing my taxes a few weeks before April of every year so that she could beat the annual deadline which falls on the 30th of every April, I sympathized with her desperate need for cash, because of her concerns for supporting her children as a single mom.

The argument that I'm making here is not as much about the astronomical rates that she charged me, while preparing my income tax forms every year, for the last 10 years or so, but again the kind of arrogant feedback I'd get from her, every-time I asked her a relevant question regarding when my forms would be in and this would routinely happen a few weeks before the tax deadline of April the 30th of every year.

She'd fire back at me and constantly go into this repetition and say out loud on her phone, or to me personally, whenever

she'd visit my household and arrogantly walk away every time I'd ask her the same question.

There was never a time that she was willing to rationalize and give me the answers that were needed to at least assure me that she'd follow up on my requests so that I'd have some idea of roughly when my income tax forms would arrive so I'd never get caught between a rock and a hard place by not having those forms arrive on time. Amazingly, even when she had shown me some bad attitude that needed adjusting, the forms would arrive and she'd process them professionally and I'd finally get my GST for those number of times throughout those years that I was dealing with her as a client.

Now this is where she really started to rock my boat eight months before I was to change over to my seniors' pensions, which would include my GIS and Old Age Security along with my Alberta Seniors Benefits. Service Canada sent me some forms to fill out and mailed back to them so that I could become eligible to receive these benefits, once I turned 65 the following year of March of 2021.

So when I filled them out, I then mailed them out registered mail to Service Canada. The processing as mentioned in their forms confirmed that it would take at least eight months to process. Being that we were at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I had read in the local newspapers, about online scammers and mail in scammers, who'd pull the fast one, on people getting conned to reveal their social insurance numbers on forms mailed to these unfortunate victims of fraudsters, only to find out later that these poor souls, were scammed out of their credit cards and bank accounts, all because some scam artist made forms sent out to look legitimate enough to have these victims buying into these deceitful scams.

Well, the worry about this was on, and I needed my tax specialist to look over the forms sent to me by Service Canada to assure me if these forms were legitimate in her eyes. She assured me they were, when she read them over identifying the traditional formatting that Service Canada was known to do. So then I thought to myself, "Wow my tax specialist is calm and not being that usual arrogant woman that I'm accustomed to dealing with this time. We both seemed

to be on the right page with one another, one of the few times our communication together was starting to finally lock in for the better.

So I thought at that time! Then I thought like usual, I'd be getting a call from her, like I was usually known to, at least one week in advance, before the yearly deadline for sending in your tax returns at the end of every April the following year.

Well I knew things started to smell not so rosy and was feeling worried about not hearing from her one week prior to the deadline date to have my forms arrive, so that I'd have her fill out my tax forms to qualify for my newest transition to GIS, Old Age Security and my Alberta Seniors Benefit. I waited for four more days to see if she'd call me back to inform me if my tax forms had arrived at her place.

When the four days were up, I received no call from my tax specialist. It was now April the 27th, 2021 and I was worried as Hell, knowing that if these forms would never arrive to my tax specialist. As a retired Edmonton Senior, who by the way still keeps his foot in the loop, while working as a volunteer Alberta Street News Media Relations Coordinator and contributing writer, I would have no other source of income to rely on, which would force me out on the streets without a roof over my head.

I quickly picked up the phone that late evening and called my tax specialist, asking her if my forms arrived. She replied, "No they didn't." I asked firmly, "Why not?" Again her reply was low toned, "I don't know."

I was infuriated by this woman's flat reply and challenged her, "Well what's wrong and how come you don't have an answer this time?, I'm going to be out on my ass without a roof over my head, if I don't get those forms from you. What is going on? Why don't you have an answer for me?"

She certainly seemed to have some kind of agenda with me at this point of the discussion, because her next answer went like this, "Because, you're always being pushy."

So I thought at that moment all that time as of lately down the road, she had intentionally planned to prolong the process of getting my forms, jeopardizing my chances of receiving these benefits, knowing that I'd be out on my

Serious Adverse Side Effects of Covid Vaccine: One Man's Journey

By Sharon Austin

The Gov't of Canada gives a weekly report of side effects following COVID-19 vaccinations. On the website it states: As of December 10, 2021 a total of 61,495,494 vaccine doses have been administered in Canada. Adverse events have been reported by 28,825 people or 5 out of every 10,000 vaccinated. Of these, only 6,581 were considered serious or 0.011%. Some of the serious adverse effects include anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction), rare blood-clot events, higher than normal reports of Guillain-Barre Syndrome, and Myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle). Statistics are just cold impersonal numbers and no one ever thinks that he or she will be part of that .011 %.

My son, Christopher, is an entrepreneur who opened his own gym in Vancouver. He manages the gym as well as works as a personal trainer. He was very healthy and fit, has never smoked

and leads a very healthy lifestyle. When the pandemic hit, Christopher followed all the government mandates: limiting capacity, masking, sanitizing machines after each use, and social distancing. For a while all gyms were even closed to the public. He got his two doses of Moderna vaccine as without being vaccinated he would not have been able to operate the gym. After the second dose of vaccine he became extremely fatigued. Never one to admit he was sick or complain, Christopher kept working thinking the fatigue would pass. Soon, he was working a few hours, then going home to rest. He said it felt as though his dog was sleeping on his chest making it hard to breathe. Finally, he went to emergency and was found to have myocarditis. He has had tests including ultrasound, heart rhythm monitoring, a treadmill test, and an MRI scheduled for January to see if there is any permanent damage. He is currently taking treatment and is hopeful of making a full recovery within a few months. Myocarditis typically impacts younger males and is now being linked in rare cases to mRNA-based vaccines like those made by Pfizer-Bio-N Tech and Moderna.

I am not writing this to discourage people from getting the vaccine. On

the contrary, I have both my vaccines like a good citizen following Canada's guidelines. I believe that the vaccine is our best hope of ever getting out of this pandemic that has been so hard on us all. I just want to make people aware of a rare side effect that can happen and encourage anyone having fatigue, difficulty breathing, and chest pain after the vaccine to seek treatment promptly. Each one of the .011% is a real person whose life, loved ones, and livelihood have been impacted by a serious adverse effect. On Dec. 10, the federal government announced it would launch a pan-Canadian vaccine injury support program to provide no-fault support to anyone who might experience a serious injury from a COVID-19 vaccine.

On the bright side, Christopher sent me a video of his birthday dinner and although he has lost more than 20 pounds he looks ok. He was even able to blow out all the candles on the cake, but I noticed they had kindly put only 10 instead of 48!

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rear without a roof to sleep under, so I let her have it anyway, "So you let me down intentionally."

With that final disclosure that I had made to her, she felt that gave her validity to let me go by replying, "Do me a favor, don't call back here again."

My immediate and relieved and happy to have this over with reply was, "Good then I won't have to put up with your uncalled for, deplorable treatment of me and will go to a more reasonable tax specialist who'll treat me with more respect."

Her final and as usual arrogant reply was, "Good. You just go and do that." And then followed through by hanging her phone up on me.

After the dust had settled, the following day I did some shopping around for an estimate to see where I could find a fair and honest tax specialist that would serve my needs efficiently and with a

reasonable rate. After searching out about three different tax services companies, H&R Block offered the lowest service rate among the three searched out. The reasonable rate was only \$62 dollars, a much more feasible rate than what I was being charged by my previous tax specialist. So I found H&R Block friendly, consistent on their delivery in getting my taxes done on time and my forms arrived that same day while they were being tracked down from their office computer. Well imagine that! I was right all along about the deceptive tactics that my old tax specialist was using on me, evidence of her intentionally prolonging the process to get my forms out to Service Canada on time. When I turned 65 in March of 2021, the seniors pensions had arrived at the end of that month and I knew then that H&R Block would be the right people to deal with, whenever I needed forms filled out for my income tax returns.

I'd like to extend my sincerest appreciation to the staff of H&R Block, first

to Ferdousi Islam for her moral support in hearing my story about the arrogance of my former tax specialist, who had me on edge, while I was trying to make that transition to my seniors pensions. Her professionalism and compassion in serving my needs made my time the more convenient.

Also H&R Block Client Service Leader Nurjan Watson and Tax Professional Richard Large, again a sincere thank you to a wonderful H&R Block team, whom I look forward to seeing some time in April of 2022, because as the old saying goes, "If you don't like the service, like I didn't from my previous tax specialist, for better service, I'd highly recommend the good old folks at H&R Block!"

2021 ETS Stuff-A-Bus Campaign keeps stuffing those buses

By John Zapantis

Giving generous donors an opportunity to stuff an ETS transit bus with donated bags of groceries is a great idea for raising public awareness about the essential need in helping to feed Edmonton's not so fortunate. That's what the 2021 ETS Stuff-A-Bus Campaign is all about and it's been around providing free food support of non-perishable food items since 1995 here in Edmonton.

So when the first annual event commenced some 27 years ago, one ETS transit bus parked outside of Save-On-Foods grocery store was used in this public fundraising campaign to encourage Save-On-Foods customers and members of the public to donate a bag, or bags of groceries while stuffing that bus with non-perishable food items. As the popular and very helpful campaign's first year became successful in raising public awareness to the cause, so, too, was the demand for additional busses to be added to its fleet in helping to feed more people.

Edmonton Transit System, who notably organizes and hosts this very important cause every year since its inception, has partnered with the Edmonton Food Bank to make this a reality for the thousands of Edmonton families and single people, who essentially depend on this unique event in making ends meet when the going gets tough. The five day fundraising campaign was held between Wednesday, November 24th through Sunday November 28th, 2021. The event was held at various Sobeys' store locations in Edmonton, Spruce Grove, Alberta and Strathcona County.

This year's campaign provided a total of 16 buses all parked in front of 16 Sobeys' stores in Edmonton on Saturday November 28th., where generous donors, who purchased non-perishable food items from many of its stores, brought generous grocery bag donations to these busses in anticipation of stuffing these grocery bags into the buses, helping to make that cause, the success it has become to help

feed the hungry.

City of Edmonton transit peace officers with their cruisers were also at all 16 Sobeys' store locations greeting Sobeys' customers, while encouraging them to make donations to the cause. The officers were only on site from November 24th to November 26th. On November 28th, during the last day of the event, an ETS LRT transit train was parked at the Clareview station and was used as a food drop off depot, where customers were encouraged to bring donated grocery bags of food inside the waiting train.

Money donations have been given in past events at various Sobeys' locations, but unlike previous food campaigns, this year's event prohibited money donations, because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

To show you how successful this popular food and cash raising public awareness campaign has come along since its humble beginnings, up to the year 2020 as statistics confirmed by the ETS Stuff-A-Bus website's support show: In 2020 over 7,000 Kilograms of food and \$7,500 in cash were donated through an online text and at various Sobeys' grocery counter checkouts. Prior to the ending of the November 24 to 28, 2021 ETS Stuff-A-Bus Campaign,

the campaign's website also confirmed that in the long term during its 27 years in existence, the dedicated movement, has collected over 535,000 Kilograms of food and \$495,000 dollars in cash donations in helping to support thousands of needy Edmontonians.

ETS Stuff-A-Bus staff member Marvin Babiuk, who also holds the working title of Team Lead Customer and Retention, was located in a parked LRT train situated at the Clareview LRT station, while collecting donated bags of groceries from generous donors. Babiuk also took some time out from his duties to give ASN an interview and was more than delighted with this year's generous support from its many selfless and generous donors,

Babiuk said, "We're really happy to have in person collections. It's very important. We have a lot of positive reaction. Our staff is actually helping out, so they can help contribute to the community. I can tell you, there's been a number of people that we've come across that were really happy to see the busses come back so that they could contribute and support Edmonton's

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ETS Stuff-A-Bus staff and volunteers seen here show off non-perishable food items donated by generous donors. From left to right are, ETS Lead Customer Engagement and Retention Member Marvin Babiuk, ETS LRT Service Foreman Lacey Remus and Volunteer Heather Hinkel.



The mysterious Saint Valentine

By Joanne Benger

We all know we celebrate Valentine's Day because it is the birthday of St. Valentine, the patron saint of love. My favourite picture of him is on the 2012-13 Saints Calendar, and under his picture it says, "St. Valentine, Patron of Love, Young People and Happy Marriages."

I realized I didn't know how he came to be the patron saint of love and decided to research it for you and me. Actually I discovered Valentine is no longer a proper saint. The feast of St. Valentine was first declared to be on February 14 by Pope Gelasius in 496 AD. He remained a saint until 1969 when St. Valentine's feast was dropped from the liturgical calendar and now St. Valentine's name does not appear on most lists of saints.

This is probably because no one knows who he was or even if his name was Valentine. Some have suggested that Valentine, a corruption of the French word *galantin*, meaning lover, was chosen to rename this patron saint of lovers. Valentine or Valentinus was the name of several saints and martyrs, who lived in various parts of the world and according to the Acts Sanctorum, February 14 was the feast day chosen to honour seven of them. Of these seven, the two best known were martyrs who died during the reign of Roman Emperor Claudius II. One was a Roman priest. The other was the bishop of Terni. According to legend, the priest was imprisoned for rescuing persecuted Christians. While in prison, he restored the sight of the jailer's blind daughter. He was clubbed to death February 14, 269 or 270.

The bishop of Terni died on February

14, a few years later. Claudius had tried to abolish marriage because married men made poor soldiers. The bishop felt this went against the spirit of God and secretly married young lovers, a crime punishable by death. There is no record of either saint writing love poems or songs and neither was involved in romance but their feast was just a day before February 15, the pagan feast of Lupercalia, the lover's festival. Young men drew names of maidens who would celebrate with them and gifts were exchanged.

The church tried to Christianize Lupercalia by having young people draw names of saints instead of lovers and assume their virtues. This did not catch on but Christian and tradition became interwoven as the two celebrations merged into one. Soon a watered down celebration of Lupercalia took place on Valentine's Day and the holiday spread throughout Europe. Valentine's Day took root in England during the Middle Ages. Chaucer mentioned Valentine's Day in the 14th century as did Pepys in his diary in the 17th century. In 16th century England valentines were exchanged and a young man would wear the heart of his beloved on his sleeve for a week just as the knights of old went to battle with the scarf of their beloved tied on their arms. In the 19th century British settlers brought Valentine's Day to America and we made changes to fit our culture.

Still, I want St. Valentine to be real. I like the legend of the ordinary Roman youth named Valentine, who was sentenced to die on the Appian Way. He fell in love with the jailer's blind daughter and set her love letters. His last message to her was received at the very moment he was being put to death. It was signed, "From your Valentine", and that is how lovers have signed their valentines ever since.



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Food Bank. So we're really happy that we're really trying to go a little back to normal and raise a lot more food and funds to support Edmonton's Food Bank. Last year's drive collected over \$7,000 in cash donations. So when we raise the food and funds we provide that to Edmonton's Food Bank. They are the experts in determining who needs support. So we rely on

their expertise to help distribute food to those that are less fortunate."

The COVID-19 pandemic has notably caused millions of deaths world wide, company shutdowns, mass layoffs, high unemployment and as a result of this, many of Edmonton's once established working class have no other choice than to turn to the Edmonton Food Bank for its generous support.

This year's 2021 ETS Stuff-A-Bus Campaign collected 23,327 Kilograms in

donated non-perishable food items and \$6,561 dollars in cash donations that were allocated to the Edmonton Food Bank who have also helped to support and champion this cause for hunger. The donors and many local sponsors who helped with the 2021 Campaign also need to be commended for their selfless time and effort in helping to make this event possible for those less fortunate.

It's happening at the library

By Allan Sheppard

"Libraries aren't just a place to obtain books for free. They're one of the few public spaces left in our society where you're allowed to exist without the expectation of spending money."—Facebook meme

"To make children happy is not difficult," wrote the late English philosopher Bertrand Russell in an essay published in 1932, *Should Children Be Happy?* "It requires only affection, common sense, and good spirits."

That observation begins a longer passage that appeared recently as a meme on my Facebook newsfeed. I had been thinking about writing a column in praise of the Edmonton Public Library's Children's Library at the downtown Milner branch. Russell's insight seems to me a truism worth sharing.

It also seems a perfect description of how the EPL's downtown Children's Library operates and an equally apt explanation of how it works. And why it works so well.

(I assume that other EPL branches and systems in other communities offer similar services equally wisely and well. Many library systems cite and demonstrate inclusivity as a core value. But the Milner branch is the place I know best. If you recognize its virtues in your own branch, you and your children are fortunate, as I and my grandchildren are.)

I have the privilege of spending a lot of time with my three youngest grandchildren, now aged 13, 8, and 6 years. We started making regular visits to the downtown library about three years ago, soon after they moved to Edmonton.

The branch was then in temporary quarters at the former Hudson's Bay store building. Space and activity options were limited, but there was enough to keep all three occupied and engaged: games, toys, and elementary tablet computers for the youngest, my granddaughter; standard, music, gaming, and virtual reality computers for her brothers. And books, of course; though my grandchildren, having been born into an environment dominated by electronic technologies, do not fetishize books the way children of my generation did (and still do, many of them, as adults

and elders).

The re-opening of the made-over downtown branch offered more space and additional activities.

There is a children's Makerspace, with Lego and a multitude of craft options for hands-on builders and creators, a variety of electronic music-making options, a green-screen photography set-up, and access to several programmable miniature robots: opportunities to explore, discover, create. And learn according to each child's own interests and at their own pace, using their own undirected imagination and unguided by adults, unless parents/grandparents intervene, which I avoid: the best discoveries are those children make for themselves.

There are many other things, as well, but I will not describe or list them. My point is not to dwell on what the Milner Library's children's department offers, except to say the offerings are interesting, varied, and suitable to children of all ages. It is not so much what is available that I find impressive and admirable; it is how it is offered.

The library and all of its staff offer a perfect demonstration of Russell's criteria for making children happy: affection, common sense, and good spirits. Children of all ages are not treated like children; they are welcomed and respected for what they are or can be: children, yes, but more importantly as learners, adventurers, explorers—as citizens or, perhaps more accurately, citizens-in-training.

The children's library and its staff make every effort to meet the needs and expectations of the children who visit. I have not yet seen any librarian impose their or the library's needs or expectations on the children. Librarians will intervene if a child's safety is at stake but, again, with the affection, common sense, and good spirits Russell recommends.

I have never seen a staff member talk down to or over the head of a child. They treat children as equals: in learning and sharing, if not yet in stature and experience.

I do not know whether children's library staff are trained to respect and treat children as responsible individuals or if management has a strategy for identifying and hiring staff with that ability. I do know that I wish some of their skills could be transferred to me and my grandchildren's parents. This world would be a better place, if children could be treated at home,

at school, and in the community as they are in the Milner Library.

Russell goes on, in his observation, to tell us why we should not expect this to happen, at least not as much or as frequently as he and I would like: "I am constantly told by my friends...that those who make children happy unfit them for later life. The highbrow tells me that the world is a horrible place which can only be endured by those who have never experienced happiness and therefore do not miss it.

"The ordinary citizen tells me that it was not by means of happiness in his early years that he was made into the man he is. No, sir, it was by stern discipline, by the austere experience of going without, by toil and hardship and severity."

In other words, spare the rod—or deny the child character-building austerity, leavened with suffering and hardship—and spoil the child.

Critics who disapprove of Russell's prescription, presumably reacting to his reference to "the austere experience of going without" assume that he recommends giving kids things, stuff, technology to make them happy. But surely he is citing, not condoning, an argument of his critics with those words. There is nothing about wanting children to be treated with affection, common sense, and good spirits that calls for them to be given anything more than respect, attention, and support.

Russell is not advocating materialism or consumerism. He is, I believe, advocating citizenship, personal agency, and the exploration and discovery of one's own self, rather than one's these-days-expected role of consumer.

As Russell sees it, the contrary view—the popular, almost universal, view of the ordinary citizen in his day and ours—perpetuates itself. "The man who says this is speaking the truth; it was no doubt by such methods that he was made into the man he is."

I like the way he understates his rejection of this reality. "Whether this is altogether a recommendation of the methods is, however, perhaps less certain than he thinks."

Libraries like EPL's Milner branch are among a depressingly small remainder of places that continue, valiantly, to resist such methods.

And, yes, they are (still) free to all, especially children.

Why Did They Call Them Pigs?

By Rod Graham

Most people don't even know the origin of the word used for police - the word 'pig' - It originated in the 60's. It refers, not to how they look, act... nothing like that. It simply refers to their character: Spiritually bankrupt, although they make 50 bucks an hour - ironic. It refers to their spiritual characters and corruption. They stink spiritually, they stink morally, they stink because of their twisted principles and lack of character and honour. If you've ever ventured out into the countryside of Manitoba you'll smell a pig farm from miles away. There's no rotten, filthy smell like it.

Not Fallen - Pushed!

By Rodney Graham

After many years living in Winnipeg, Manitoba, I've learned a big reason why there are so many poor people on the streets. Why there are so many homeless...

It's because they are treated like dogs in shelters and also subsidized income, railroaded, back-bitten, and evicted. Some evicted outright - some leave due to persecution, bullying, and a toxic atmosphere...

Low income/subsidized housing, on their website in Winnipeg proudly proclaim that they "work closely with police and security" every day. I think the public is becoming more aware of what a bunch of thugs these two communities really are. And then there are agencies (Authorities)

who are just as malicious - that is public housing and health care - especially so called "home care" people.

What that means is that some of these buildings are like prisons, and if someone is targeted and bullied - they will find themselves on the street. If it doesn't happen quickly, it will happen eventually if they are "targeted" for bullying, it will happen to some - even if they are completely innocent of any wrongdoing - That's the extent of the culture of malicious gossip, gangsterism, and bullying in the wicked city of Winnipeg.

But I think Winnipeg is not isolated - I think this happens everywhere in the US and here in Canada. The poor are not slipping through the cracks. THEY ARE PUSHED. Here in Canada, the poor and needy are not "helped" they are preyed

Patient assaulted by hospital security

By Linda Dumont, photo by Jeff Gearey



When Jeff Gearey went to the Leduc Hospital to get some blood work done, he not only was unable to get any service but when he protested he was physically removed. For Gearey, the hospital is his life line for treatment he is undergoing for cancer. On September 10 his left leg swelled up and it stayed that way for almost four weeks. When he went to the doctor he was told there is a mass at the base of his spine.

Gearey said, "I am 62 years old and the chemo is very extreme." He had an information session on November 5 at the Cross Cancer Centre and on November 4 he was called by the Cross Cancer centre to go to the Leduc Hospital blood lab to get blood tests for a biopsy. Cross

Cancer faxed them the requisition form on the 4th, but the woman working at the blood lab flipped through the paperwork and said she could not find the requisition.

"She took a disliking to me," Gearey said, "I was all upset, so she called security and had me removed from the hospital. I spent the next two hours outside the hospital trying to reach someone who could fax the paperwork. I couldn't reach anyone."

Gearey was called back by Cross Cancer on the following Monday and they said he was rebooked for the bloodwork for Monday at 9 a.m. for the biopsy on Wednesday. When Gearey went to the hospital, the same nurse was there. She asked for the paperwork and he explained what had happened. She refused to listen, saying, "If you don't have the paperwork we can't help you." They did have the paperwork that had been faxed over as was later confirmed by Karen, the hospital administrator.

"I raised my voice. She called security. I was upset. I was thrown out, again" Gearey said, "Even when I was calming down the security guard continued to remove me from the building..I was on crutches and wearing a big leather coat, and he grabbed the back of my collar. Karen told him to let go of me, but he continued until I was outside the building."

Gearey can't just avoid the hospital or go elsewhere. He lives in Leduc and, he said, "The hospital is my lifeline during my cancer treatment so I can't have any more of this happening. I am relying on them.."

The police questioned a few people and phoned two weeks later to say there was nothing they could do because Gearey had not filled out a witness statement. Gearey contacted them and filled out a statement and requested they they send a copy to Alberta Health Services. He received a call from a woman at AHS, who told him there had been several other incidents involving the same security guard, and he is no longer employed at the hospital.

Artists Planting Seeds of Hope

By Rachel de Leon

The Mustard Seed Art drop-in program began as a weekly drop in 2007. The program has grown over the years, and is open to anyone who is experiencing poverty or marginalization and is accessing supports at any of the Mustard Seed locations. Art nights are encouraging and supportive, as the artists talk about themselves or the art pieces they are working on; they help one another with their artwork, and even provide suggestions and feedback on how someone might improve or change different elements of their work. As a result, the art program has created a community where people feel they belong and that friends are always near.

During the March 2020 to end of June 2021 time period, the art program was closed due to COVID-19. During this time period, one of our artists died. Sadly, his family believes that the shut-down of most support services in the downtown

area affected his ability to cope. The isolation resulted in his return to addictive behaviours that were unhealthy and when his family requested a wellness check, he was found deceased in his apartment.

The Artists Planting Seeds of Hope program was able to begin again at the Christian Care Centre location (10137 150 St NW) in July 2021 although not all of the regular artists returned.

The artists see the program as a place to connect, where they feel safe to talk and share with others who have a like-minded interest in art. Everyone is welcomed and supported at the place in life where they are currently at. The art program has brought a diverse group of people together and helped them to feel like they are family to each other. The feelings of isolation have lessened, and they feel accepted for who they are.

When asked the question how the Mustard Seed Art Program relates to the theme of Isolation the artists responded with:

- we could not participate in group art during COVID and most of us did not do any art without the program
- the art program allows us a place

to gather and socialize which wards off depression and isolation

- during COVID it was hard to get together and to paint together

- our art program is therapeutic as well as social. The social aspect is vitally important

- the art program has become more like a family with a family dynamic - like teasing and squabbles.

- art allows artists to focus on their art in different ways

The Edmonton Public Library put out a call for exhibits of Isolation Art. The Mustard Seed artists work will be on display at the Woodcroft (Westmount) Library location (13420 114 Ave NW) from January 16 to March 27, 2022. Please drop in during open hours to view the art display and enjoy the opportunities the library offers to connect with their community members. Open hours and events can be viewed at www.epl.ca/locations/EPLWOO/

To contact the Mustard Seed, locations and information can be found at theseed.ca/contact-us



Artists at work - Linda Dumont, above, and Sherien Lo, right, are two of the artists whose paintings will be shown at the Woodcroft Library. Other artists, who will have work on display, are Daryl Gautier and Johann Niranjani. Photos by Daryl Gautier