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Above: Calgary Stampede Parade Marshal and international film star Kevin Costner had the parade crowd's attention while on his horse heading westbound along 9th Ave. Southeast, during the Calgary Stampede Parade, held on Friday July 8th in helping to kickoff the Calgary Stampede that was hosted between July 8th and 17th and is notable for being the greatest outdoor show on earth. Photos by John Zapantis



ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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Mary shares her dreams

By Joanne Benger

1. I want to go to the moon and date the man in the moon and share the four quarters with him as we eat green cheese and look down upon the earth.
2. I want to be able to eat cheesecake for all three meals and both snacks without gaining an ounce.
3. I want to have a great big, beautiful bum just made for twerking but I want to have an on-off switch so it vanishes when I want to wear a pencil skirt.
4. I want to have a magic wand so I can instantly be all dressed up for the ball like Cinderella or instantly dressed in the latest hiking wear. With this wand I'll always have the right clothes for the right occasion with no need to shop or carry a suitcase. I want to experience the problems of plenty. I want to have too much money and too much stuff and so much of everything that I no longer want or need anything.
7. I dream of being found by a long lost relative a very elderly millionaire with no other living relative. He wants to meet me before he leaves me his vast fortune and of course I enchant him. I will never be poor again.
8. A handsome single man will move in next door and fall madly in love with me. He will buy me a ring with a diamond as large as a tennis ball and confess he is actually am millionaire and we will get married with a destination wedding in Hawaii and everyone I know will be there to see me get married because he has two big planes.
9. As I go to put garbage in a public garbage can I will look down and see a lottery ticket just lying there. I will pick it up and check it out the next time I go to the store and discover I have won a million. I am rich at last. I will buy new clothes and fly to Hawaii.

In Memory of Glen Dumont

Glen – The Last Year

By Linda Dumont

That whole year death waited
A lurking presence
But even so I was not ready.
Is one ever ready?
He returned, but only half way
The love in his eyes was there, incandescent,
burning as strongly as ever
I could still melt in his gaze.
But something was else was gone
The brilliance of his mind was banked down
He could be puzzled by simple things.
He could look and not understand
As I explained in simple words, concrete basics.
His amazing giftedness was gone
But the love was there
and I still lay sheltered in his arms at night.

A year before his death, Glen was changed by a severe brain injury from which he never recovered.

We're edging out way into fall

By Joanne Benger

It's September and we are edging our way into fall in this month of extreme weathers. As the saying goes, it will either dry up wells or break down bridges. Keep your shorts handy but have your parka ready and to prevent wind damage, recite, "September blow soft until the fruit's in the loft." September is the first if the four brrr months so expect ever increasing cold. Its name comes from its position in the old Roman calendar – seventh month.

September is world Alzheimer's Awareness month, Arthritis Month and Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. It is also U.S. National Sewing Month and international Square Dancing Month.

"Fair on September 1st, fair for the rest of the month." September 1 is Random Act of Kindness Day in New Zealand as well as Emma M. Nutt Day when we honour the first female telephone operator. Use the phone to make a few kind calls.

September 4 is Word Beard Day as well as Bacon Day. Love that bacon. We shouldn't play with our food but make a bacon beard then eat it.

September 5 is Labour Day. As far back as 1886 U.S. workers were pushing for an eight hour work day with the slogan, "Eight hours of work, eight hours of rest and eight hours to do what we will." This wasn't an entirely new idea. In the tenth century King Alfred the Great had this to say about dividing the day, "Eight hours for work, eight hours for play and eight hours for sleep." Samuel Gompers, who led the labour group that wanted an eight hour day gave an address titled, "What does labour want?" and answered with, "It wants the earth and the fullness thereof." September 5 is also Cheese

Pizza Day so see if you can fit one into your weekend of barbecues, cookouts, picnics and fireworks as we celebrate the summer's end.

September 7 s National Acorn Squash Day,, National Salami Day and National Beer Lovers Day. Have a good one

September 10 is Full Moon, the Fruit of the Harvest Moon.

September 11, the first Sunday after Labour Day, is Grandparents Day. Honour your elders whether living or dead, near or far, and celebrate their legacy. September 11 is also 9-11 Day when we remember that 3000 were killed including two dozen Canadians, when planes hit the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre twenty one years ago. Light a candle in their memory.

September 11-17, the second week of the month, is National Organic Food Week. Eat clean and keep healthy.

September 12 is National Pet Memorial Day. Think of your childhood pets today and do something nice in their memory.

September 14 is Creative Day as well as Speak Like a pirate Day. Yo ho Yo ho and a dead man's chest!

September 21 is St. Matthews Day. "St. Matthew brings the cold dew." It is also National Tree Day. Hug a tree today.

September 22 is the Autumn Equinox also known as Madron Day when day and night are equal and it is a time of balance when some say you can even balance the impossible. Some see it as a time to get rid of the old to make way for the new. Others believe that if you catch a falling leaf today you won't catch a cold all winter

September 26 is Rosh Hashanah Day, the Jewish New Year, also known as the Feast of the Trumpets.

September 25 is New Moon as well as World Rivers Day. It is also the last Sunday in September, the day on which we honour our First Responders. Do something nice for a policeman or fireman today.

September 26, the last Monday in September, is National Coffee Day. Enjoy.

September 28 is Facial Difference Day. About Face is a support group for those who look different because of birth defects, illness or accident. Two million Canadians have facial differences and we must look deeper to see their dreams.

September 30 is the National Day for the Truth and Reconciliation, the goal of which is to increase awareness of the individuals, family , and community inter-generational impacts of residential schools. Wear orange and participate in activities to support residential school survivors and their families.



Pope Francis apologizes to Indigenous peoples

I have been waiting to come here and be with you. Here, from this place associated with painful memories, I would like to begin what I consider a penitential pilgrimage. I have come to your native lands to tell you in person of my sorrow, to implore God's forgiveness, healing and reconciliation, to express my closeness and to pray with you and for you.

I recall the meetings we had in Rome four months ago. At that time, I was given two pairs of moccasins as a sign of the suffering endured by Indigenous children, particularly those who, unfortunately, never came back from the residential schools. I was asked to return the moccasins when I came to Canada, and I will do so at the end of these few words, in which I would like to reflect on this symbol, which over the past few months has kept alive my sense of sorrow, indignation and shame.

We want to walk together, to pray together and to work together, so that the sufferings of the past can lead to a future of justice, healing and reconciliation.- Pope Francis

The memory of those children is indeed painful; it urges us to work to ensure that every child is treated with love, honour and respect. At the same time, those moccasins also speak to us of a path to follow, a journey that we desire to make together. We want to walk together, to pray together and to work together, so that the sufferings of the past can lead to a future of justice, healing and reconciliation.

That is why the first part of my pilgrimage among you takes place in this region, which from time immemorial has seen the presence of Indigenous Peoples. These are lands that speak to us; they enable us to remember.

To remember, brothers and sisters, you have lived on these lands for thousands of years, following ways of life that respect the Earth, which you received as a legacy from past generations and are keeping for those yet to come. You have treated it as a

gift of the Creator to be shared with others and to be cherished in harmony with all that exists, in profound fellowship with all living beings.

In this way, you learned to foster a sense of family and community, and to build solid bonds between generations, honouring your elders and caring for your little ones. A treasury of sound customs and teachings, centred on concern for others, truthfulness, courage and respect, humility, honesty and practical wisdom.

Yet if those were the first steps taken in these lands, the path of remembrance leads us, sadly, to those that followed. The place where we are gathered renews within me the deep sense of pain and remorse that I have felt in these past months.

I think back on the tragic situations that so many of you, your families and your communities have known; of what you shared with me about the suffering you endured in the residential schools.

These are traumas that are in some way reawakened whenever the subject comes up; I realize too that our meeting today can bring back old memories and hurts, and that many of you may feel uncomfortable even as I speak. Yet, it is right to remember, because forgetfulness leads to indifference and, as has been said, "the opposite of love is not hatred, it's indifference and the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference" [from Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel]. To remember the devastating experiences that took place in the residential schools hurts, angers, causes pain, and yet it is necessary.

'Cultural destruction and forced assimilation'

It is necessary to remember how the policies of assimilation and enfranchisement, which also included the residential school system, were devastating for the people of these lands. When the European colonists first arrived here, there was a great opportunity to bring about a fruitful encounter between cultures, traditions and forms of spirituality.

Yet, for the most part that did not happen. Again, I think back on the stories you told: how the policies of assimilation ended up systematically marginalizing the Indigenous Peoples; how also through the system of residential schools your languages and cultures were denigrated and suppressed; how children suffered physical, verbal, psychological and spiritual

abuse; how they were taken away from their homes at a young age, and how that indelibly affected relationships between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren.

It is painful to think of how the firm soil of values, language and culture that made up the authentic identity of your peoples was eroded, and that you have continued to pay the price of this.-Pope Francis

I thank you for making me appreciate this, for telling me about the heavy burdens that you still bear, for sharing with me these bitter memories.

Today I am here, in this land that, along with its ancient memories, preserves the scars of still open wounds.

I am here because the first step of my penitential pilgrimage among you is that of again asking forgiveness, of telling you once more that I am deeply sorry. Sorry for the ways in which, regrettably, many Christians supported the colonizing mentality of the powers that oppressed the Indigenous Peoples.

I am sorry. I ask forgiveness, in particular, for the ways in which many members of the church and of religious communities co-operated, not least through their indifference, in projects of cultural destruction and forced assimilation promoted by the governments of that time, which culminated in the system of residential schools.

Although Christian charity was not absent, and there were many outstanding instances of devotion and care for children, the overall effects of the policies linked to the residential schools were catastrophic. What our Christian faith tells us is that this was a disastrous error, incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

'Only the first step'

It is painful to think of how the firm soil of values, language and culture that made up the authentic identity of your peoples was eroded, and that you have continued to pay the price of this. In the face of this deplorable evil, the church kneels before God and implores His forgiveness for the sins of her children. I myself wish to reaffirm this, with shame and unambiguously, I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous Peoples.

Dear brothers and sisters, many of you and your representatives have stated that begging pardon is not the end of the matter. I fully agree: that is

only the first step, the starting point. I also recognize that, "looking to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient," and that, "looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening." [from Pope Francis's Letter to the People of God, Aug. 20, 2018]. An important part of this process will be to conduct a serious investigation into the facts of what took place in the past and to assist the survivors of the residential schools to experience healing from the traumas they suffered.

I trust and pray that Christians and civil society in this land may grow in the ability to accept and respect the identity and the experience of the Indigenous Peoples. It is my hope that concrete ways can be found to make those peoples better known and esteemed, so that all may learn to walk together.

For my part, I will continue to encourage the efforts of all Catholics to support the Indigenous Peoples. I have done so at various times and occasions, through meetings, appeals and also through the writing of an Apostolic Exhortation. I realize that all this will require time and patience. We are speaking of processes that must penetrate hearts. My presence here and the commitment of the Canadian Bishops are a testimony to our will to persevere on this path.

Dear friends, this pilgrimage is taking place over several days and in places far distant from one another; even so, it will not allow me to accept the many invitations I have received to visit centres like

Kamloops, Winnipeg and various places in Saskatchewan, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Nonetheless, please know that all of you are in my thoughts and in my prayer. Know that I am aware of the sufferings and traumas, the difficulties and challenges, experienced by the Indigenous Peoples in every region of this country. The words that I speak throughout this penitential journey are meant for every Native community and person. I embrace all of you with affection.

On this first step of my journey, I have wanted to make space for memory. Here, today, I am with you to recall the past, to grieve with you, to bow our heads together in silence and to pray before the graves. Let us allow these moments of silence to help us interiorize our pain. Silence. And prayer. In the face of evil, we pray to the Lord of goodness; in the face of death, we pray to the God of life. Our Lord Jesus Christ took a grave, which seemed the burial place of

every hope and dream, leaving behind only sorrow, pain and resignation, and made it a place of rebirth and resurrection, the beginning of a history of new life and universal reconciliation.



Pope Francis on his visit to Edmonton. Photo by Khayman Giroux

The ghosts that weren't

By Joanne Benger

When we first moved to town and I started walking daily I would go through the underpass. I noticed strange shadows that seemed to grow menacingly large and then, just as quickly grow small and retreat.

I did the logical thing. I used the hand test. I held out my hand and wiggled my fingers and was relieved when the

shadows did likewise. They were shadows of me, but why did they loom over me then shrink to nothing? Of course it was the lights spaced out for the entire length of the underpass. My shadow grew and shrank as I walked under the lights just like the sun makes our shadows small at noon and large in the evening.

After my husband died, I often went to the cemetery alone to tend to his grave. It is a lovely, peaceful country cemetery that reminds me of the campsites he liked when we went motor cycle camping I feel that he is buried in the perfect place. Spring turned into summer and

one day I noticed a cold shadow pass over e as I left. Soon I noticed this happened every time I visited and I wondered if it was John saying, "Good bye and thanks for visiting." We were a very close couple and once he said "If I die first I will watch over you if I can." I felt safe and protected.

Then the trees were trimmed and the cold shadow vanished. It had just been the shadow of a tree. The cold shadow had started after it leafed out.

Tragic circumstances bring people to homeless shelters

By John Zapantis

The COVID-19 virus is the menace that has caused mass destruction to millions of families and people worldwide. The deadly virus inevitably forced company shutdowns, causing mass layoffs, people losing their homes, families separating and after losing everything people forced to take up refuge in homeless shelters while joining the ranks of the homeless. I was also forced into going homeless after having conflict with a female relative, who has power of attorney over my 92 year old mother. I previously lived in the same house as my mother and that female relative, who jeopardized my relationship with my mother, whom I also helped at times while driving her to her doctor and shopping appointments.

This incident had my butt out the door as my mother suggested that I leave their home and find a place of my own, forcing me to jump on an E-bus and drive to Calgary where I ended up checking into various homeless shelters, since my arrival in that city back in March of 2022. Today, I currently reside at one of the Calgary Mustard SEED's shelters, located in Calgary's Southeast industrial district.

Trying to pass the time at this facility can work on the nerves. The trick to occupying your time constructively without getting into trouble with the odd, problematic person, is to look for leisure activities or to try to find the right people to join in a sit down over a cup of coffee and some entertaining conversations.

One of the many popular discussions that I've had the opportunity of sharing with some of these people, where their tragic stories of how they ended up in a place like this in the first place. I'm amazed at the many stories that have been shared by those many that I've taken time out to get to know. I've heard enough stories in this place that makes me realize that by having the lesser of the resources that all of these former success stories have had, life for me wasn't that bad after all. Some of these success stories range from a former biker, who was once the chapter president of a notorious biker gang that I will not name, who once held the dubious distinction better known in as a shooter. This former biker seemed to always feel that

he was constantly under police surveillance, because of the dangerous type of lifestyle he once led. At one time he'd confessed to me that he finally regretted the misdeeds he'd committed to his rival enemies. He also mentioned that he'd been up for a serious offense and had a court date set up, for a court trial that seemed to keep him constantly on the edge.

Another man whom I once met at a previous homeless shelter, was wearing a tattoo one percenter logo on his forehead.

There never seems to be a dull moment in this sanctuary of four huge walls, generously accommodating over 300 homeless people. As the days progress, so do the unusual situations that unfold in this sometimes crazy place that tends to keep you constantly on your toes. I've had so many unfold before my very eyes.

One night, while laying on my cot at the backend of the room, where the lights are dimmed down after 9 p.m., this old fat man in his late 60's walks up to my cot and makes the most ridiculous comment, in a low man's voice, "We should have a matt burning ceremony."

Catching me off guard, I tried to deflect this unwarranted comment, thinking that he'd made some kind of racist overtone and I felt like I was the intended target.

So since he was new to the facility, to avert any type of conflict between me and this man, I then insist on helping his set up camp next to me. I asked, "Do you need any help?" His reply is sarcastic, "No, I don't need your help. Now move down a few rows over away from me and to some other cot."

I then stood my ground and replied, "I'll tell you what. I'll let the attendant know I'm moving over for you, but you know I really don't have to move over. We can both stay put."

I then hear an intrusive and loud demanding voice, asking why I'm talking so loud?

I reply without any hesitation, "Stay out of my business." He walks over to me, like it's all his business and replied, "No."

I get up from my cot and aggressively stick it to him, "I'm going to inform the staff about all this non-sense."

Now at this point, I'm leaving to complain. He starts to follow me. I now turn around to challenge him. He then gives me a push with his one hand. I immediately push him back, showing him I'm not about to be his door mat. I successfully stand my ground. I yell out, "You're a psycho. I know how to deal with your kind."

I continue on to file my complaint to the front office. One of the staff members sees my story as invalid and now threatens to suspend me for complaining.

He fails to realize that my complaint holds substance, for a rational argument.

But within 10 minutes, I'm now miraculously saved by the bell. An African staff member walks up to me in the office claiming that he caught this pushing incident between me and that guy on one of the shelter's interior cameras, where it shows this man following me, where it also shows on replay footage, the man pushing me from behind.

That visual footage, saves the day for me and prevents me from having my place jeopardized from being suspended and booted out, because of the ignorance of these two individuals.

The staff members who vouched for me, now tell me to go back to my cot, without a worry.

I decide to honour the peace that's been restored, so I suggest to the staff member who vouched for me, when he re-played that video of me, being pushed by that guy, that I'd insist on moving over a few rows over in allowing this grumpy old man, the privilege in having his space, without me being around him.

I then decided to move to another section of the building, where another cot was reserved for me and away from that next person's problem.

When meeting people for the first time at this shelter, I've heard enough entertaining and informative graphic hair raising stories that could easily fill the many pages of a national best seller.

One other story that would easily qualify as a page turner for another best selling read, is a young man, who I recently met, who ended up in a wheelchair, after receiving a severe beating from a group of violent men, who ambushed him and nearly left him for dead, after finding out he was their enemy of a rival Mexican drug dealing cartel.

His story, association and status with the internal working of the Mexican drug cartel would inevitably have potential for a national best selling read, or possibly a motion picture project.

The hard core stories seem to be a plenty, where I currently reside, but then there are the heartbreaking stories of people making sacrifices to help loved ones struggling with illness.

Such as in the case of one female doctor from British Columbia, who had to forcefully sell her house in Victoria to essentially look after her mother's ill health, while supporting her medical expenses and hospital stay.

But with compassion and support for her ill mother, she receives the tragic news from the nursing home that her mother

had a bad fall that eventually led to her death. That tragic fall would emotionally and mentally devastate her daughter, who'd not only lost her house in her efforts to show love and support for her mother, but her occupation as a reputable doctor and the confusion of it all that led to her to her homelessness at this Calgary shelter.

These stories and more, are stories that keep me motivated and determined in rising above life's adversities.

When I give this serious thought. My story in what brought me to the Calgary Mustard SEED shelter. It isn't as half bad as the tragic stories I've heard from others that has forced them into homelessness.

I'm grateful to have had the incentive to have heard some of the not so fortunate, who've shared their tragic stories with me, as a gifted writer.

I realize now that I've got a lot more going for me and that day will once again arrive-when I'm finally out of here and settled into my own place that I can call home again-and have some ever lasting peace at last.

Disaster Day Thoughts

By Yvonne Mark

Yvonne Mark is a resident of the Downtown Eastside. She is a writer, a poet, and a proud mother of seven. Growing up in Haida Gwaii with her siblings, she spent many summers going for picnics in Gray Bay, running on the beaches. Her parents would use an old metal bed frame to barbecue salmon on the open fire. Halibut, crab, clams and deer meat were a regular part of her diet.

"I actually felt so deprived as a kid. My Caucasian friends, they got real meat, like chicken and pork chops. I felt so deprived. Now I look back and God, what I wouldn't do to have that," she says.

At age 16, Yvonne moved to Vancouver to continue her education because the school she was attending in Sandspit only went to Grade 10. She then worked a union job at Prince Rupert Fishermen's Cooperative Association and took care of her children. After the death of her 11-year-old son, Yvonne turned to drinking and drugs. With the help of AA she

sobored up and has been alcohol-free for 16 years.

She now has 10 published poems to her name, works with the street paper Megaphone magazine, and is writing her book, *Salmon Soup for my Soul: Stories of Aboriginal Recovery in the Downtown Eastside*. Yvonne is also a board member at the Carnegie Community Centre, which is often described as the neighbourhood's "living room."

She believes we can always be doing more to help the less-fortunate. For her, that means saying hello to the people she passes in the streets, asking how they are doing, and phoning a friend a day to check in on them.

"I tend to be attracted to the loners. I have empathy for people that have no one, that don't have family," she says. During the summer heatwave, Yvonne herself was living alone in her studio apartment.

"We were forewarned. People were saying it, but when it actually happened, it was to me quite surprising. It was surreal. You didn't want to turn the news on. I just felt fortunate that my place wasn't that hot. It faced the alley. And so it was in the shade and I had my fan on. But it was a pretty grim summer to be honest. There was a feeling of helplessness.

I sell food at the corner of Main and Hastings. I'd see people in my building sleeping outside on the benches. So much heat. I'd offer water or check to see that they're OK. "How are you doing out there? How are you handling it at home?" Especially Elders.

"I've seen people both handing out ice and water, fans were sold out everywhere and a lot of people pouring water over themselves using the hose, right by the Carnegie, or whatever else they had. I've seen that in quite a few parks and stuff too. It is too hot for them to even go out and shop and stuff. You could almost feel the anguish that they were displaying. A lot of people were talking about how hard it was to breathe because of the smoke coming in.

"I'd pray it doesn't happen again. I never thought I'd ever complain about heat. To be honest, I've always liked heat. And it was really scary. To me, it was scary because it just happened. I mean, I just never felt that kind of heat here before. "Oh my God, when's this going to subside?" And it seems so sudden.

"When you're so used to disaster in your life, you learn to just go with the

flow. You just learn to accept. The death of my son is the biggest, hardest thing I ever went through, losing my kids into foster care, all that. Feeling like a total failure. I never thought I'd ever crawl back into the rooms of AA. I never thought I was worthy of it. I was better off dead. I remember praying that I'd be murdered. And if that ain't a disaster, I don't know what it is. AA says accept the things you cannot change. Even when I felt panic, I wouldn't allow it, because I'd always tell myself, "It's worse for others." To look back at all that happened with the heatwave, it's just another disaster.

"What's this world coming to? And how can we prevent it? I've always been a diehard environmentalist. We were taught not to waste anything. We had to eat everything we had on our plates. Those were just common traits my parents taught us. There isn't anything I waste. Nothing. Cloth diapers for all my seven children. My kids got Thermoses instead of juice boxes. My garbage pail's the size of a coffee tin. It takes about a week to fill. I swear to God, a roll of paper towel probably lasts me two years in my place because I use cloth. I compost, I recycle.

"What difference am I going to make? It's just me. I really do believe there should be more education. Education about prevention. And have youth have a voice in what they're going to face. Have voices from people that have experience. There's always more that can be done. Don't just have Earth Day once a year. Once a year to dim your lights, how ridiculous. Why can't we do it all the time? Use your car less. It's things like that. Simple things. I get frustrated, seeing all the waste around me. You can't tell people how to live. But I just see all this as a preventable disaster.

"Up in Haida Gwaii, it was beautiful there. The moss up there, the trees. Huge, huge trees. We'd play in the bushes, in the woods, the rainforest, picking berries, huckleberries, salmonberries, thimbleberries, gooseberries, salal. I didn't even know what pollution was. If only this whole world could be like the beauty of the rainforest. If people could respect the lakes and the streams and all that, like they do their own property. If only."

Courtesy of Megaphone / International Network of Street Papers

Newly recruited Calgary writers and poets join the ranks of ASN

By John Zapantis

Our new breed of talented poets who aspire to continue to write for the Alberta Street News had evolved from my many discussions with them over an array of subject matter, primarily discussions evolving around their hard times, while overcoming many of life's adversities.

Melissa Hill is a classical example of what it takes to rise above her own adversity. She's managed to apply her own knowledgeable skill set in finding ways to create her own resources, when finding a place to lay her hat, after she's had enough of those unnecessary wake up calls, while living in a shelter that at times were considered, uninhabitable.

I know personally speaking, as a current homeless person, what some street people's attitudes can do to immensely impact one's determination to tolerate the negative conditions that are imposed on them.

An unavoidable conflict may arise at any moment, while sharing the same space as a cluster of people.

Some people, because of either mental illness, or substance abuse, will often rant on all day about how angry they are at the world, only to try to affect others like Melissa and myself, trying to interfere with our private discussion at a table at the Mustard SEED drop-in centre in Calgary.

So what do winners do when someone crashes their party, when interfering with their conversation? They ignore the fuss and move over to another table where they can't be bothered.

In my three months of getting to know Melissa, who at times has shared many intellectually and interesting

discussions on her perspective on people behaviour and life in general, I've come to realize that poetry would be the best way for Melissa to interpret her perspective on these and many relevant social issues.

I suggested to her a while back that she look into our provincial street newspaper as a way to empower herself while explaining those perspectives in written poetry.

I'm happy to say this natural has a moral calling to represent not only her personal views on life through poetry, but is capable of representing any voice that needs the right to be heard.

Since encouraging Melissa to contribute written pieces to our paper, her first poem entitled She has the Power was published in the 2022 Alberta Street News May/June Bi-monthly issue.

But like in her gifted potential to tell her story through her poetry, there's also the humorous side of this talented young writer, who recently wrote her second published piece, entitled Mock Complaint to Alberta Street News.

A humorous mock complaint written and sent to ASN Editor Linda Dumont, included with Melissa's traditional no holds bar brand of humour that adds to the logical argument of Melissa's gifted hand at the stroke of the pen is here to contribute as a regular of our paper.

DeShawn Vanconnett is another individual that I originally met at the Mustard SEED Street Ministry.

He left home at age 17, through a series of tragic circumstances.. A survivor in his own right, he was once raised in an emotionally and physically abusive home environment, which made his living conditions intolerable, forcing him to leave home and look for an independent living environment.

When I got talking to this young man, who inevitably rose above a lot of adversity, and heard his life's story, I realized I was not only talking to a natural born story teller, but a raw talent, who could also inspire his rise above adversity through written poetry.

I was so impressed with this talented gem that I suggested that he start putting his feelings on paper, while writing

a short story, or even a poem.

DeShawn took my advice and as a result of his courageous efforts in taking that huge step, he wrote a poem entitled Cancer Pain and Peace, his prolific interpretation of tolerating his cancer and inevitably defeating it.

That first time published poem was published in the 2022 Alberta Street News May/June Bi Monthly issue.

One more interesting multi-talent that adds to my discovery is a Mustard SEED volunteer named Kelvin Pyke.

Kelvin and I met at the Mustard SEED. His diversity in maintaining a long and lasting conversation was enough to convince me that the outspoken and opinionated individual has a vast knowledge of literary wealth that could go in many directions. I also suggested that he write for our paper, the Alberta Street News.

Kyle's interest was deeply encouraged and recently he ended up writing a short story opinion headlined, 'Who are the real criminals', an opinion piece, on the abuse of power at the hands of security guards, who have crossed that line when physically abusing innocent civilians.

That brutal opinion piece was also published in the 2022 Alberta Street News May/June Bi Monthly issue. Kyle writes under the pen name Real Sugar.

The undiscovered writer that I've had the good grace of discovering, has led to a new venture, that I've now taken on while recruiting Calgary's hidden talent, that need to have an open forum to express their personal issues, while helping Alberta Street News raise public awareness to the relevant issues in helping to eradicate the stigma of how the homeless are often labelled as hopeless and useless.

But with the story I've shared and being homeless myself through a recent set of unavoidable circumstances, stories like these are part of our paper's purpose in opening the eyes of the 'non-believers', who are delusional in their perceptions of what they think of the homeless and what they should really know when reading on the various relevant social issues that Alberta Street News is reputable for.

Cyber Security month

By Joanne Benger

It is October, the eighth month of the Roman Calendar and October is Foster Families month, Women's History Month, Small Business Month and Breast Cancer Month as well as Cyber Security Month. There is an internationally recognized campaign to help the public learn more about cyber security. We must all learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for cyber security and become aware of how to protect ourselves our accounts and devices so we can stay safe on line.

October tells us what our future weather will be like. A warm October results in a cold February, a rainy October forecasts a wet December, and much frost and wind in October promises a mild January and February. If we have more rose hips than usual and squirrels are extra fat and storing more food than usual, expect a harsh winter.

October 2 is International Day of Non-Violence, Wine Day and Name Your Car Day.

October 2 – 9 is Mental Health Week that ends in World Mental Health Day on Sunday. "Inner peace what a quest!"

October 3 is Habitat Day as well as National boyfriends Day. October 4 is World Animal Day and the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals. His symbols are birds, deer and fish. October 4 is also the last day of the Hindu celebration of Sharad, Navarati.

October 4-5 is the Jewish Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

October 5 is the Hindu Dasarati (Dussehra) the tenth day of Navarati. Brides and engaged couples look forward to this day as well as wishers and friends give them gifts.

October 5 is also World Teachers' Day which is held annually to celebrate teachers around the globe.

October 9 is Full Moon, the Falling Leaf or Travelling Moon. October 9 is the Run Victoria Marathon as well as World Post Day and the week of October 9 – 15 is Earth Science Week.

October 10 is World Food Day when we try to fight food insecurity. Donate to the Food Bank or quietly help someone in need.

October 10 is Canadian Thanksgiving Day which is always the second Monday in October. Some have their turkey on Sunday followed by holiday Monday. Happy Thanksgiving day. Happy long week end.

October 17-18 is the Jewish Simchat, the Rejoicing of the Law, a happy occasion when the scrolls of the law are carried in a procession seven times around the synagogue with people singing and dancing.

October 8, 1931 Thomas Edison died and President Hoover suggested that at 8 MST on October 21 people extinguish their lights for one minute as a tribute to the man who made our lights shine.

October 24 is Diwali. This Hindu and Sikh New Year Festival lasts for five days. Lamps are lit, houses are illuminated and gifts are exchanged as everyone says, "Happy Diwali."

October 24 is also the day when we wear blue for abused children.

October 28 is Fyribod's day, which is usually a rainy day. Dress warmly.

October 31 ends the month with Halloween. We have Dead-monton, hayrides, fire pits with smores, hayrides scavenger hunts, monster bases, ghost tours, trick-or-treaters, costumes and masks

and Jack-o-lanterns on this spookiest day of the year.

Your Halloween Survival Guide

By Joanne Benger

The following were collected from a variety of unreliable sources that wish to remain anonymous. Use at your own risk.

1. Avoid evil places and evil people. Surround yourself with people who inspire you and don't drain you.
2. To keep your house safe, bless it by saying, "Bless this house with love, light and laughter."
3. Pray. Prayer opens portals to the spirit world as it energizes you and puts your defences up.
4. Before leaving an evil place all people should be saged to prevent the evil spirits from following them home.
5. Regularly burn sage to clear your house.
6. Burn frankincense and sprinkle holy water to purify an area.
7. Lock windows and floors, cover mirrors and keep a light on for protection.
8. Put a circle of salt around your bed or house for protection. Before building a house on dubious ground sprinkle salt over the area.
9. Hang a cross over your bed and put a bottle of holy water under it so you can sleep without fear.
10. Wear red for protection and give your pets red collars. Put red berries on windowsills.
11. If outside after dark whistle for protection.
12. Wear a cross and carry holy water.

Specific protection

1. To keep witches out decorate your house with holly or St. John's wort and put a pair of scissors under your doormat.
2. Never kill a cat. A cat could be a witch in disguise. If you hurt or kill it, you have hurt or killed a witch and will have nine years of bad luck even if your life is spared.
3. Watch for tears. Witches can't cry and Bysantine physicians wrote that you can recognize a werewolf by its tearlessness.
4. Werewolves are meek, kind men by day but eat raw meat, howl and run as wolves at full moon. You can cure a werewolf by calling out his Christian name three times. The werewolf will instantly transform back into his meek, kind human form.
5. Never kill a coyote. Navahos believe they are evil spirits turned back from the land of the dead to wreak havoc on earth. A coyote killer will lose his wits unless he is saved by the coyote chant or devil chasing ceremony.
6. Wear bat jewellery. In the east five symbolic bats are worn for five blessings.
7. For luck all year carry the foot of a white rabbit that was shot in a cemetery on Halloween at midnight.
8. For protection against ghosts secretly make a rowan wood cross and fasten it to your coat lining with red thread. Keep it hidden from view.
9. If you have a pure black dog, paint white circles around his eyes on Halloween night to keep everyone safe.
10. To keep vampires out of your house decorate windows with garlic or small crosses.
11. Never invite a vampire into your house. They cannot enter uninvited but once invited in, can come and go freely at any time.
12. If you suspect a man is a vampire accidentally spill holy water on him. If he sizzles and burns he is a vampire. If he merely gets wet he is not a vampire.

Words and social change

B Timothy Wild

Earlier this summer I went to the opening night of the “live documentary play” *Parts & Labour*, by Col Cseke. I wasn’t clear on the medium, but soon discovered that a “live documentary is developed through original interviews, later transcribed and used as verbatim texts for professional actors to recreate on stage.” Over the course of a decade, Cseke interviewed Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs), living in Brooks, together with longer standing residents of the town and, stemming from that, explored issues of workplace safety, the vulnerability of unorganized workers, cultural clashes in a town experiencing significant socio-demographic transition, and various shades of racism (both latent and manifest). I learned about the different levels of pay based on how many cuts were required to prepare the carcass and was reintroduced to themes of how TFWs continue to be exploited by a system based on hard work and limited financial remuneration, against the shifting backdrop of tentative employment, residential and legal status.

Many of the concepts were not new to me. We live in an economic system where the exploitation of labour is key to profit making. The wellbeing of the working classes is secondary to the financial bottom line, and wages reflect this brutal, socially constructed reality. But I think that the strength of the live documentary was that it framed complex social policy issues in the words of folks most actually affected by them. As I have written numerous times before, just because policies exist it doesn’t mean that they are adequate, effective, and inclusive. The words of the workers (and their families) ably demonstrated this point. Words are essential for social change. However, words can also act as a brake on that selfsame social change. Words can be used to create a notional framework of what is possible; indeed, what is collectively desirable and realistically attainable. These words can help frame the prevailing ideas of “common sense” and serve to limit the debate by creating the norms of acceptable public and political conversation. The cultural theorist Raymond Williams writes of “the central, effective and dominant system of meanings and values, which are not merely abstract but which are organized and lived.” Examples of these words and phrases readily spring to mind: consumer choice, the gig economy, efficiency, resilience, productivity,

fiscally prudent and freedom.

With the appropriation of words, and the application of “common sense”, the meaning of the words can be controlled, and the transformative impact dulled. Emancipation Day, lived experience and decolonization, to take some additional examples, all sound progressive and inclusive. And they can be.

There is nothing inherently bad about these words. They can be markers of social justice. But they can also be used to limit social change. They can be used to diminish chances of meaningful change, while presenting a veneer of progress and inclusion. For example, August 1st was officially recognized as Emancipation Day, the day when slavery was officially abolished in (most) British colonies in 1834. The commemoration is important. However, I would suggest that the day can lead to a papering over of the facts of history. For example, although the enslaved people were officially emancipated, they had to work as apprentices for the next four years for their former owners. The conditions of this apprenticeship were often no better than those of the actual days of slavery. Additionally, proletarianizing measures were put into place – including taxation – to force the formerly enslaved people to remain as workers rather than pursuing various approaches of small-scale agriculture. Emancipation Day is a reflection of the work of the abolitionist movement in Great Britain, who certainly played a significant role in emancipation, but so did the economic decline of the West Indian sugar trade and, more importantly, the agency of the enslaved people themselves in making slavery less and less viable as a system of economic extraction. Finally, we must remember that over twenty million pounds sterling was paid in compensation... to the former slave owners who lost their “property”. Such compensation led to the already wealthy becoming even wealthier, and maintained (if not increased) the social, economic, and cultural divisions of the pre-Emancipation economic system. So, while Emancipation Day is an important event, we need to recognize what those words meant and what they mean today as we continue to be faced by injustice.

Another phrase that I think can lead to limitations on action, is “lived experience”. In and of itself, the aggregation of lived experience in the creation of public policy is a good thing. It can ensure that the unintended negative implications of a policy are avoided, that the policy fits into a broader range of initiatives in a comprehensive manner, and that it meets the actual needs of people as opposed to statistics. However, the call to action of wanting to hear the voices of

lived experience can prevent social change. For example, anti-poverty initiatives are always amplifying the voices of people living in various dimensions of poverty. People living in poverty can tell us what it is like to make heart breaking choices between basics, such as food and shelter. “They” can tell “us” what poverty is like in gruesome and gritty detail. But then what? I think people with lived experience of poverty have told us for hundreds of years what the problems are. They have also been vociferous in outlining the solutions: a decent income, decent education, decent health care and dignity. But we fail to act upon this, and often embark upon further fact-finding missions. Those with lived experience have told us their thoughts; we need to act on that. As noted by Terence Ranger, we not only have to provide voices for the voiceless but “ears for the earless”!

A third example can be found in the word “decolonization”. Most people are well aware of the massive dislocation and damage caused by colonialism. The exploitation of land, lives, and labour for the economic gain of the upper classes of the metropolitan does not bear repeating in English, French, German, Dutch, Portuguese, or Spanish. Colonialism is an ongoing tragedy. However, I would argue that decolonization can be a feel-good word and may limit authentic change. I don’t think we can decolonize in an incremental manner. If we do – particularly from a position of power – we are still in that position of power, as the dominant group still “gives” gifts of agency and autonomy to the colonized; this is hardly decolonial. In fact, it is another form of colonialism, without being as ostentatious. Frantz Fanon wrote tellingly of the role that a timid implementation of postcolonialism can have on limiting the extension of justice, participation, and inclusion. Perhaps democratization would be a better word? However, that has its own baggage too.

The point is that words and phrases carry a lot of power. But quite often the succor that people achieve from words such as emancipation, decolonization and lived experience can limit the scope for transformative change. It is important to deconstruct language. It is essential that we are politically sensitive to words. But in so doing, I would argue that we must look more to dimensions of power rather than the comfort of politeness in language. Otherwise, we will be more inclusive (or careful) in our discourse but remain stuck in the reality of an unjust place

The eye of the storm

By Angelique Branston

The day of mushroom picking would begin with having a good breakfast of toast with sugar and possibly cinnamon drowned in milk. I would put on my shoes to protect my feet from the nettles and thistles, and bugs (for just hanging around the grassy yard or walking down the road I preferred to be barefoot, to feel the earth beneath my feet.

My mom, brother and I and in later years my little sister, at first carried in a snuggly on my mom's back, then as soon as she could walk herself she would toddle along climbing over the fallen logs, clumsily at first, but as time went along, deftly, would pick up empty cleaned out 4 liter of ice cream tubs, one for each of us kids and two for mom. Filled with great enthusiasm we would leave the house for a day of mushroom picking.

I loved these adventures into the woods behind the little farm house we lived in, an hour's drive out of Edmonton, two miles from a small town with one corner store that to this day has a little bit of everything from milk to barbed wire and nails.

The house had one master bedroom on the main floor. You would have to walk through the kitchen and walk around the house to use the outhouse for our house had no running water. It had electricity for the lights and propane for the heat.

You could go further into the house where you would find the old wood stove and the little color TV, the focal place in the living room. To the left of the living room there was another walkway with a storage place to the left and to the right a steep stairwell that led to a big open space with two small rooms side by side, each with a window looking out over the driveway. Outside was the barn with an electric fence to try and keep the goats in, which worked for the

most part except for the Alpines that are very strong, good jumper goats, also very loyal once you have proven that you love them.

The whole upstairs was covered with wild animal print wall paper. In the day time I could sit and stare at the wallpaper for hours thinking and wondering about the animals from a distant land, fantasizing about having a huge lion, tiger, wolf or (after watching Sheena warrior princess) a zebra. At night the eyes of the animals would stand out and seem to glow eerily as the moonlight would cause shadows to cover the animals bodies and light upon their faces the same way a face is covered with light and shadows as you hold a flashlight under your chin. I would lie awake staring at the walls in terror of the things in the shadows.

But I digress

Those days of mushroom picking were always filled with joy and wonder.

There was a little trail we followed, there was a little area of wild land, then the big building that served many purposes as we lived there, from a turkey coop to a rabbit barn to, finally, a storage shed. Then there would be a pasture to walk through till we finally came upon the forest. We would spend hours walking through the forest. Mom would tell us the names of the plants, trees, and whatever living thing, plant or animal, and what uses they had. She taught us how there was nothing in nature we needed to fear, that the wildlife did not want to hurt us. Also, if we got lost in the woods, how we could forage for food and survive. We learned to look at the berry or mushroom and if there was bugs on some of them we knew they were not poisonous and therefore safe to eat.

In the deep forest even on the hottest day it would be cool as we walked among the feet of the giant trees. There is a feeling in the deep woods far away from civilization and all its trappings, for cell phones were the stuff of sci-fi in those days, of serenity and peace. My world filled with beauty as we scoured the ground in search of mushrooms. If we were

lucky we would find patches of morals, funny looking black wrinkled mushrooms that grew to a peak. Only some years had weather that was conducive for them to grow. But we could always find the button and puff ball mushrooms.

When we returned with our spoils mom would look through our buckets placing aside the ones filled with worms or some other insect. Then we would go outside to the old pump and take turns pumping the water so the other could wash up.

Mom would cut up the mushrooms and fry them with homemade goat butter (we would put the cream into a jar and seal it up good. To make butter we would shake the cream back and forth, back and forth until our arms would be too tired to move. Then the jar would be passed to the next person. We would watch TV to pass the time).

We all loved our supper of toast with goat butter and mushrooms.

Our days of mushroom picking were numbered, though we knew it naught at the time due to allergies triggered by pollution, too many sources to justly blame just one. It could have been the year of the wild well with all the toxins it spewed into the air. Or our parents who were dusted yearly with DDT. Possibly the lead animal figurines placed in nice arrangements, perhaps the mercury passed around in class from hand to little hand as we ood and awed at the little liquid ball of metal that wiggled and rolled around.

The days of mushroom picking may be over but I will always have those precious memories. Whole days filled with joy, the aches and pains of a day filled with foraging and hiking for miles, the smell of the food wafting through the air and the taste of food enhanced by exhaustion.

They were days filled with wonder and peace, days where we could escape the storm my ex father made with his love of cruelty and uncontrolled alcoholism, where I could be myself without fear.

Life

By Angelique Branston

I woke with the air taught with tension
I had fallen asleep on the couch
Happy, tired from a long day of foraging and full from the days spoils.
The joy filled day but a distant memory now as I lay still, trying to keep my breathing calm and even.
I am confused
The silence so loud it was defining
Then a low male voice speaks into the silence.
I peak out and see my older brother standing stiff, his eyes wide with terror
The man's voice is clear, self assured
"The next person who moves I will shoot"
He gestures swinging his arm around, his forefinger caressing the trigger of his hand gun.
No one moved
No one breathed

The man walks out of the room.

My brother and I run up the stairs and lie in our beds

I can hear my blood rushing in my ears.

I lay there waiting to hear the shot that would end my mother's life, too scared to pray.

After what felt like forever my mom came upstairs and told us that everything was OK now.

Dad had been sleep walking again.

Just one man

Who even in sleep had the power to take a life.

There are some people that can't be forgiven

Who have a special place in hell prepared just for them when they pass on to the next life

Because the wrongs that they have done are too horrible, too monstrous.

One can only let go, slowly draw the poisons from your soul

And press onward, not looking back lest I faint

To fulfill the task given for my life.

To live not just survive.

The Old House Next Door

Story and Photos by Sharon Austin

For more than a hundred years the old house on the acreage next door stood strong against the summer rain and the bitter winter blizzards. It was a large two-story white house set very close to the rutted country road. Two towering black poplar trees flanked the house, the branches of one stretching out across the lane.

When I first moved to Musquash more than fifty years ago as a young bride, the big house was freshly painted white and Boston Ivy trailed all along the side winding its way up to the red brick chimney. The mud nests of swallows were visible high up in the eaves. Tall windows on every side flooded the house with sunlight and a wide central staircase led to the upstairs.

I don't know who built the house but it was built sometime after 1903. In 1903 a forest fire raged through the bustling community of Musquash. Back then Musquash had two lumber mills, stores, churches, and a school. A small forest fire was fanned out of control by high winds and within hours the town was gone. Devastated families who had lost everything huddled in the cold wet marshes where the fire could not take hold. Not everyone made it out alive. Some elderly people were unable to make it out in time and perished in their houses. Others died of smoke inhalation while trying to find missing family members. In the

morning light the townsfolk emerged from the marshes to see that only six of the 110 buildings survived. The militia was called out to help and the city of Saint John came to the rescue of the homeless with donations and fundraisers to help the community rebuild. Crumbling overgrown cornerstones and depressions in the ground that once were cellars are now the only evidence of the lost homes. Within 20 years the community was rebuilt and the big old house was part of the rebuild.

When we moved to the community in 1970 the big house next door was owned by a senior couple who grew huge gardens. Sometimes on the week-ends van loads of children from the orphan's home would come to help tend the vegetables. The couple also had a campsite where people could tent overnight as there was a lake nearby. A few years later the couple moved to the city

and a new family moved in. I remember looking out of the window to see our new neighbours; a middle-aged man, a young woman, and a red-haired baby girl. The old house that had known the slow faltering steps of seniors and the acrid smell of pipe smoke now delighted in the patter of little feet and a baby's soft giggle. Another baby and several cats and dogs soon joined the ranks and the house was full of joy. Each year the house would proudly glow with Christmas lights and a big tree would grace the living room. On Christmas morning, the old house was gladdened by the happy cries of children and the delicious aroma of roasting turkey and apple pie. The years flew by in a flurry of birthdays and first days of school and the old house watched the children grow. Within its sheltering walls it carefully guarded all the secrets, the joy and heartbreak and hopes and dreams of the



family.

As the family grew older the old house began to creak and groan and the moss-covered roof began to leak. The winter frost heaved the floors and the foundation began to crumble. The family tried to keep up with the repairs that the old house needed but it was a losing battle. When the girls were grown the couple purchased a mini-home to put on the property and they moved out of the big house. How cold and barren that first winter was for the old house that had known so much warmth and activity. It stood silent and alone as the wind howled

through the broken window and ripped the door from its hinges. Soon the house was turned into a barn that housed an old horse and a family of cats. At least the house felt useful again as it sheltered the horse and enjoyed the sweet smell of clover hay. In time the horse was sold as it became too much work for the man who was not well. The family of cats had multiplied and the old house soon became known as "The Cat House." Cats of every size and colour would

stare out of the windows as I walked by. The man bought huge 50- pound bags of cat food for his clowder of cats and when he went for a walk five cats would walk behind him like little dogs. Sadly, although they were well fed the man could not afford the extremely high price to have his cats vaccinated, spayed and neutered and some of them caught a cat disease and died. When the old man passed away the cats were rehomed. Four of them came to live with me and other neighbours stepped up to take them in as they were all lovely cats.

As the years went by the inner staircase crumbled and fell to the ground floor. Still, the house found a way to be useful as it housed a family of raccoons. Tragically the mother raccoon was killed by a cruel neighbour who was worried about his flock of chickens. We could hear the hungry babies crying way up in the upstairs bedroom. My husband used a ladder to get upstairs and dug the poor babies out of the wall where the mother had made a nest of old paper and rags. The baby raccoons were very small

so we took them home and bottle fed them until they could eat by themselves. When they were grown, we released them back to the woods. One of them that I named Pansy had babies in the upstairs bedroom the next year. I watched her crawl up the back of the house each day and crawl in the broken window to her babies. In due time she brought out four healthy-looking half-grown babies.

In July one of the tall black poplars fell with a thundering crash foreshadowing things to come. In August, I was out in the yard when I heard what sounded like a horrible groan followed by the shriek of bending metal and an earth-shaking shudder. The old house had given in and completely collapsed. Some in the community had complained that the house was an eye-sore and a danger to children and they were glad it was gone. I never saw it that way. I thought about all the history and all the tales that house could tell. The old house had served its families well and as with all earthly things it had come to its end.

Does the paranormal exist

By Joanne Benger

This spring Telus gave me a free preview of T&E and I found myself watching shows about the paranormal. It is something I have never taken seriously mainly because I think of it as fantasy like science fiction and fairy tales. Still, as I watched Paranormal Caught on Camera, I realized I might have had a paranormal experience in the early '80s.

My husband and I had gone to an auction sale of a farmer who was reputed to be a very unhappy man with problems and I bought several boxes of books and magazines. The next day went to a garage sale and I bought a rosary and some religious ornaments. A few days later my husband was working in the fields and I was alone in the farmhouse sorting and putting away my treasures.

I thought the rosary looked familiar and fetched a copy of Catholic Digest to check it out. Yes, there it was. As I compared my rosary to the picture I realized it was in mint condition but its case was quite won, I thought, "Some sick person held the case for comfort. It just fits into my palm." I could almost see a little old lady holding it and that made it all the more precious I had inherited my grandmother's rosaries but I never got the one she carried with in her

final days because it was buried with her.

Supper time was coming and I started peeling potatoes. Then I happened to glance towards the living room and saw the distinct shadow of a man rising from the couch and standing up. I was alone in the house and there was a stranger heading in my direction. I did the natural thing. I dropped the potato and knife and ran out the door in a panic.

I watched but no one came out. I decided, "I am too imaginative. It was probably just the shadow of a tree blowing in the wind. I went back into the house and finished preparing supper. All was peaceful. We remained in the farmhouse until we retired and the trees remained the same, but I never saw a shadow like that again. I was often alone in the farm house and never felt fright before or after the incident. I still have the rosary and ornaments as well as a few of the books.

After viewing pictures of similar shadows on T&E I came to the conclusion that perhaps we had unwittingly bought something evil along with the books and magazines. With the rosary, religious ornaments and copies of Catholic Digest, scattered about through pure serendipity, I had something protective in every room and that exorcised the evil. It had to go and I saw its shadow as it left.

On the other hand it could have been an optical illusion caused by the shadows of trees and clouds. I think I prefer that explanation.

Halloween riddles

By Joanne Benger

Q. Why was the glamorous new skeleton depressed? A. She could no longer twerk.

Q. What do you call a female bat? A. A wombat.

Q. What do you call a smart bee using zoom? A. A zoombie.

Q. Where do ghosts go to get exercise? A. To the haunted gym.

Q. What do you call a well informed wolf? A. An aware wolf (were wolf).

Q. What do you call a medium who has a child? A. A crystal packing mama.

Q. What do you call a ghost's injury? A. A boo boo.

Q. What do you call a poltergeist's visitors? A. Polter-guests.

Q. Where do werewolves live? A. In warehouses.

Q. How does an old fashioned ghost go? A. The ghost goeth.

Q. Who referees the bat's baseball game? A. The vampire bat.

Q. What do witches eat at the seaside? A. Sandwiches.

Q. What do you call a cautious wolf that is always on guard? A. A wary wolf.

Q. How do you capture a spirit? A. Spear it.

Q. How many treats can you put in an empty trick or treat bag? A. One. After that it is no longer empty.

Sanity restored after A&W restaurant returned my Royal Bank debit card

By John Zapantis

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you just discover that you've lost a debit card or a credit card? Obviously that someone has your most valued possession and that they're going to go on the town and let their friends live it up, by running up a tab at your expense.

That's one of the crazy thoughts that I had, after losing my debit card at a Calgary A&W restaurant, after using it to purchase a Papa Burger and a large coffee. Panic started setting in when I went on a Calgary Transit LRT train ride, while heading off to a neighbouring McDonald's in Calgary's West Brook Community. When I got off the train and walked into the McDonald's, I was in the process of going into my wallet to search out my debit card. It was then I noticed that the debit card was missing from my wallet.

I immediately realized that I must have left my debit card behind at that previous A&W restaurant, where I had been at 8:55 p.m., five minutes prior to closing time. I'd ordered a takeout meal consisting of a Papa Burger and a large coffee. So worried as hell, about leaving my debit card behind, I immediately headed off by Calgary Transit LRT train to see if I could locate my debit card at the Calgary downtown A&W restaurant located at 1st street Southeast and Stephen Avenue.

I was trying to recollect in my mind whether I had left the card in the transaction machine after inserting it and forgot to take it out, while distracted by the purchase of a Papa Burger and a large cup of coffee, or if by some chance I may have dropped it on the restaurant's floor after pulling it out of that debit card transaction machine, while distracted by the thought of my nicely prepared meal. Then my mind started searching around for other tragic possibilities, like a group of people may have entered the premises, a minute prior to closing time, possibly a party group of people, who may have found my card on the restaurant's floor, swooped it up and later run up a drink-

ing party tab while celebrating this 'free lottery find' at 'my expense' and having the pleasure of draining my savings account with the funds that currently showed a balance of \$1600 dollars.

When I finally arrived to the A&W restaurant's front entrance, it was already 10 p.m. and the lights inside that business were all turned off.

I then made a call with my cell phone to the Royal Bank's 24 hour emergency service line to immediately cancel my debit card, hoping that I could prevent whoever may have possibly found it, from using it at their convenience.

When I got a hold of the Royal Bank 24-hour service line, a young woman with a Filipino accent assisted me immediately. I explained my situation without any hesitation and told her that I was at the A&W restaurant at 8:55 p.m., five minutes prior to closing time and may have forgotten my card, after inserting it into their debit card machine while making my food purchase with it. I then asked her to cancel my card, to prevent the possibility of debit card fraud from being committed. The lady on the other end of my phone insisted that I answer a series of questions in verifying who she was actually talking to.

The questions ranged from, 'Did I have any other accounts, besides my savings account?' I then answered, 'Only a car loan monthly payment of \$505 dollars a month on my 2021 Toyota Corolla LE model.'

Additional questions were asked and I answered them except for one that hit an emotional cord and made my head feel like going through the roof on this one. The question that had me on edge, was how many purchases did I make with my debit card earlier that day and what were the items purchased?

I replied nervously, that I couldn't remember, as I thought to myself that after each purchase, I'd thrown away the receipts that day.

She then said, she couldn't help me, because she wasn't actually certain, who she was talking to.

I became agitated by how she was handling my inquiry and aggressively demanded that she cancel my debit card and if she didn't, she'd be held accountable, knowing that she could prevent this card from being used further, if it was already used earlier, prior to my calling

for her assistance.

All she could say in return is that I was covered. I replied firmly, "You mean you cancelled it?"

She replied, "No I can't." I insisted that she had the power to and if she didn't and if anyone had my card and was to use it in anyway, I'd be taking legal recourse against her and her company.

She again said, "There's no way I can cancel it." I angrily replied, "That's cowardice." She hung up the phone.

That same evening, I vowed to myself, I'd do two things for the following morning. I'd go back to that A&W restaurant during their opening hour at 7:30 a.m. and produce my Alberta driver's license identification card verifying my identity and see if they had my debit card stored away in a safe place. The next stop would be to get to the Royal Bank to cancel my debit card. The following morning at 7:30 p.m. I arrived at the A&W restaurant and met the restaurant's Supervisor, Jason Leyesa, who greeted me when I walked through the main door entrance. He was working the cash till.

I told him that it was possible that I may have left my Royal Bank debit card at his restaurant while making a food purchase, five minutes prior to closing time at 9 p.m. that Saturday evening.

I showed him my Alberta driver's license identification card. He then quickly opened up a lower drawer, located below his front cashier, looking directly into the bottom drawer. He then asked me, "Are you John Zapantis?"

I acknowledged enthusiastically and out loud, "Yes I am." He then proceeded to hand over my Royal Bank debit card. As I carried on happily about my returned debit card, I told A&W staff that I needed to use their debit card transaction machine to see if my card was actually cancelled.

When I inserted my card into the A&W debit card transaction machine and punched in my secret pass word, I soon found out and was relieved as ever that the lady who I spoke to the night before at the Royal Bank's 24 hour emergency line, did actually cancel my debit card that I inserted into the debit card machine, which was declined.

I was now assured and feeling relieved, now that my debit card was actually cancelled.

Calgary transit returns my laundry bag

By John Zapantis

Living in a homeless shelter can create fatigue, especially when you're forced to awaken like I usually do, every day at 5:30 a.m., then struggling to get your duff out of the bed and into the shower. It's really no different than an army drill that demands all out human and physical determination in learning the art of survival and outsmarting the enemy. But getting up essentially every morning at 5:30 a.m. inevitably takes its toll on shelter dwellers like myself, who start to feel the effects of fatigue from getting up early in the morning and end up later in the day falling asleep in various public places.

I can personally attest to this experience through my many episodes with both sleep deprivation and having to get up every morning at 5:30 a.m. where struggling to stay awake, while writing one of my stories for the Alberta Street News at a public eatery, or just simply having a coffee while struggling to stay awake.

While riding the Calgary LRT train, after completing a load of laundry that I had washed and dried at a laundry mat, on my way on the train to Calgary's Southland Community, I started to fall asleep for a moment or two. When arriving at the last stop and transferring onto another train at the Calgary City Hall train station, I awakened from another bout of fatigue. The confusion of it all

with fatigue putting me briefly to sleep and awakening only to find out that we had arrived at the Calgary City Hall Station, made me rush for the exit doors and walk quickly over to the station's platform to sit down and wait for the next arriving train. In the confusion of it all, when I finally was seated, I looked over my left shoulder, checking to see if I had placed my laundry bag, to the left side of me, only to notice that the laundry bag wasn't seated next to me. It then dawned on me that in the fatigued state of mind that I was in and now reflecting on how I could barely stay awake on that previous train ride that I obviously left my Walmart laundry bag on that train when I woke up from that deep sleep.

There in front of me, as I was currently reflecting on my lost bag, were two of Calgary Transit's Training Officers Michelle Tebo and Ron Readwin, whom I approached, telling them that the train that had just left to go eastbound towards Calgary's district called Saddledome, had my laundry bag on it.

In no time Michelle Tebo, was advised by her colleague, Ron Readwin, to contact the conductor of that train to inform the conductor to look out for a blue Walmart shopping bag that acted as my laundry bag, containing my one shirt, a pair of jeans and one pair of black socks. A little while later, Michelle looked over at me and said, "I contacted the driver and advised him to check for your blue Walmart bag on the next stop at Bridgeland Station." I was also told that she'd be waiting to hear what the results would bring.

A few minutes later Michelle got a call from the conductor, who informed her that they had located my abandoned bag.

She then looked over at me and said, "They found your bag. It will be on the next train coming back here for 2:02 p.m. The bag will be on train number 2338."

At this point in time, my watch read 1:30 p.m. Michelle also advised me to walk over to the other side of the platform I was standing on, so that I could receive my item from the train that was scheduled to arrive at our appointed time. Without any hesitation, I walked over to the other side, waiting patiently for the arrival of train number 2338 that was scheduled to officially arrive with my blue Walmart laundry bag of clothing for 2:02 p.m.

When train number 2338 finally had its turn in pulling up to the LRT platform at the Calgary City Hall Station, I walked up to the train to greet the driver, who came out from his driver's seat and asked me if I was John. I happily acknowledged that I was. He then handed me my bag of items as I gratefully thanked him, for his efforts.

Calgary Transit along with its two other hard working and thoughtful staff members Calgary Transit Training Officers, Michelle Tebo and Ron Readwin, certainly need to be commended in being right onto locating my abandoned clothing items. They were professional and courteous in following up on what needed to be done in retrieving my runaway bag.

I can now say that my train ride that started as a roller coaster ride, while worried to death about trying to locate my lost items, smoothed out for the better thanks to Calgary Transit's finest Training Officers, Michelle Tebo and Ron Readwin. They made my train ride less worrisome and more convenient along the way!

I then realized why the night prior that the lady whom I had talked to about cancelling my debit card, refused to tell me whether the debit card was cancelled, or not. She was obviously protecting my resources as a part of the Royal Bank's client's services policy. After all it would make more sense not to fully co-operate with someone on the other end of a that phone call, who they probably assumed wasn't me and if it wasn't, regardless, I finally realized why that lady on the other end of that phone wasn't about to clue me in on giving me that direct answer as to whether she cancelled my debit card or not. It would be also logical to know that if it was a thief on the other side of that call posing as me and they even got an answer after all, would have certainly been a part of the Royal Bank's protocol to protect her clients of any type of fraudulent activity.

That same day when my bank was open for business at 9 a.m. I walked through its main door and immediately was flagged

down by one of its bank tellers who called me over from waiting in line.

When I explained briefly to the teller about the situation regarding my lost card and wanting another replacement debit card, she acknowledged and assured me that another one would be mailed to me in ten business days.

As a result of the professional and sincere efforts of the A&W restaurant and the Royal Bank, they are to be commended in restoring my faith in the business system's protocol and more than anything a sincere and grateful thank you for helping to restore my sanity.

A false choice from the UCP: take what we offer or get nothing

Allan Sheppard

If you've been following statements and comment about Alberta's response to challenges of an opioid-overdose crisis and substance use disorders in general, you might think our United Conservative government has looked at two mutually exclusive program strategies, harm reduction and recovery, and chosen one: recovery. Recovery, in this context, is understood as encouraging Albertans who need the help to enter treatment programs and expanding treatment capacity to accommodate any increase in demand that follows.

If that is what you believe, you would be wrong. On both counts.

Cut through the media spin, and it becomes clear that, while the UCP has made a strategic policy choice opting to promote and support only recovery, the result on the street is what was known in my youth as a Hobson's choice (after a classic movie with that title), between taking what is offered and nothing. In other words, no choice at all. Take it or leave it. The UCP way or the highway; or, as was painfully obvious in Edmonton this past winter, the UCP way or the stairwells, concourses, and platforms of the city's LRT stations, where open substance use was common among users seeking shelter from the cold.

Harm reduction, as understood and rejected by the government, is defined by one of its simplest, most direct practices: provision of supervised, safe-use sites with needle exchange and other harm prevention practices. The fact that supporters of harm reduction sometimes use rhetoric that encourages that impression does not, of course, help.

In fact, while needle exchange and other front-line practices that support safe use are key components of the strategy, harm reduction is much more nuanced and holistic than that.

There are many definitions and discussions of harm reduction online. I choose to share a statement of principles published by the National Harm Reduction in the U.S. at harmreduction.org

National Harm Reduction Coalition works to increase access to evidence-based harm reduction strategies like overdose prevention and syringe access programs. harmreduction.org

Similar or identical to principles might or might not be advocated by harm-reduction proponents in Canada and Alberta, but this one seems to me a clear statement of

what harm reduction can and might be. For me, these principles taken as an interconnected whole show that harm reduction and recovery are not mutually exclusive: they are coequal facets of an appropriately holistic approach to treating substance use disorders on an individual, personal level and—emphasis and—on a social, community level, the one the UCP seems to have chosen to forget.

Harm Reduction Basics: Guiding Principles

- Accepts – for better and for worse – that licit and illicit drug use is part of our world and chooses to work to minimize its harmful effects rather than simply ignore or condemn them.
- Understands drug use as a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon that encompasses a continuum of behaviors from severe abuse to total abstinence, and acknowledges that some ways of using drugs are clearly safer than others.
- Establishes quality of individual and community life and well-being—not necessarily cessation of all drug use—as the criteria for successful interventions and policies.
- Calls for the non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services and resources to people who use drugs and the communities in which they live in order to assist them in reducing attendant harm.
- Ensures that drug users and those with a history of drug use routinely have a real voice in the creation of programs and policies designed to serve them.
- Affirms drug users themselves as the primary agents of reducing the harms of their drug use, and seeks to empower users to share information and support each other in strategies which meet their actual conditions of use.
- Recognizes that the realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination and other social inequalities affect both people's vulnerability to and capacity for effectively dealing with drug-related harm.
- Does not attempt to minimise or ignore the real and tragic harm and danger associated with licit and illicit drug use. What leaps out of those principles, with emphasis on portions I have highlighted in bold, is that harm reduction is not only about responding to needs of and potential harms of substance use disorders among individual users. It recognizes and responds appropriately to harms done to the community by users and, especially, by recovery-focused policies (there are no programs meant to encourage—read “force”—users at risk of serious harm to seek treatment. Harm reduction, recovery advocates argue, only supports, even encourages, continued use, which is in some ways true.

The problem with that approach, as described by David Staples in a recent Edmonton Journal bottoms out and reaches a point

where the benefits of using one's substance of choice no longer outweigh challenges and discomfort of continued use. That approach, as pioneered by the Alcoholics Anonymous Anonymous movement often meant having users spend time on “skid row,” among fellow sufferers, many of whom faced untimely and unpleasant deaths. But for some, a sojourn at the bottom could and did motivate a decision to seek treatment. The AA approach works for some but decades of experience show it does not work for many. To rely on the strategy exclusively is to refuse help to users who will not and cannot respond to it. And it imposes serious harm on communities where users live.

For many years, Edmonton's skid row was located at downtown sections of 97th, 96th, and 95th Streets. That is still true today, but the city's growth has produced concentrations in other areas as well. And for the past two years, the impact of Covid-19 restrictions, combined with accessibility and reduced enforcement, combined to make the downtown LRT system a refuge of choice in winter.

The presence of individuals who were down and out as a result of personal choice and deliberate government inaction intimidated LRT users. With washrooms closed in and around LRT stations, urination and defecation in elevators and platform corners were common. Reports of violence were probably exaggerated, but incidents did occur. Those who could, stopped using the LRT and many have not returned; the system is operating well below capacity, which costs us all in many ways. Add to that the impact and costs to businesses all over the downtown area, due to reduced use of public transit and related fears of exposure to substance users. In response, our government assumes—or hopes—problem users will eventually seek treatment.

That assumed/ hoped-for outcome might happen in sufficient degree to make a difference. Or it might not. The harm—to individual users and to the community—has already been done and may well be repeated as another winter approaches. Where is the province in all this? Missing in action. Waiting for its recovery ship to come in. Choosing a new leader/premier, who will probably be even more single-minded, short-sighted, and bloody-minded than the departing Jason Kenney. As for the expanded treatment options promised under current policy? Fifty million dollars isn't much of a budget in these inflationary times. Spread over three years, is next to nothing. It's an insult. Especially when the only strategy you have is to increase demand. Or hope to do so.

It is, let's be honest, a strategy designed more to win votes than seriously to confront the challenges and harms of substance use among users and for the rest of us.