

**ALBERTA**

# Street News



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# ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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# The quiet had too high a cost

By Angelique Branston

I sat outside in my backyard alone, my little dog, Spot, (part beagle part shitsu with a little bit of dachshund) beside me. He looked like a living stuffy with his short little legs and oversized paws. It was nice sitting outside away from the sweltering heat that lingered long after the sun had gone down.

There was an old mattress on the ground in the alley behind the house. Some people had been using it to sleep on for the past few nights. One of them approached the other and said in a loud whisper that it wasn't safe anymore. The police were going to clear the alley.

At first I was relieved. It had become unsafe to walk in the alley any time of day or night. Also, i had to listen to their endless parties and drunken fights. I was looking forward to the quiet.

Only a few minutes passed and I heard a car quietly pull up. The headlights were turned off on the vehicle. I heard whispering and a stifled giggle. Then Spot and I both jumped, for the two men, who came from the car, were pounding with all their strength, beating on the old mattress with their batons. It took the men a minute. They were pumped up with adrenaline, thrilled with the knowledge that they felt they had the right to beat and mangle the people of the street.

For who cares that this happens? They are the undesirable. The unwanted.

Then one man tells then to stop. He points with his baton at the mattress, and says "Empty." He felt it as if he were hunting wildlife. He said that it was still warm so they could not have gone far. They turned on the car lights. The lights shone upon the badges on their chest as they got into their squad car. The police officers drove away.

The alley was quiet.

But at what cost?

We need to feel safe where we live as a country that claims to care for all its citizens. The homeless. The unwanted. The ones found dead, squashed inside the garbage container they slept in. The ones, who have no voice. They need to be rehumanized.

Before one can take joy in beating and degrading another human being that human need to be dehumanized, called names and called trash. It strips away pieces of one's essence...

These are tricks done for centuries - no originality... They are not trash, they are people. Yes, people in need of help. Often they have a loved one and or family member waiting for them to come back home, or praying for their safety.

After a few minutes Spot and I stood up. We had been frozen in our spots with the hunting of the homeless. We went quickly into our house and locked the door. I prayed for the safely of the people in the streets.

The sweltering heat had finally left the house. The day was finally over. My dog and I went to bed. I felt guilty for the quiet that made it easy to fall asleep.



Vendor Angelique Branston with her dog Spot in 2019. Angelique sells Alberta Street News at the Strathcona Farmers' Market on Saturdays.



# Say Hello to Fall

By Joanne Bengler

Say hello to fall. Sweater days are here as we enter September, the seventh month of the old Roan calendar. The Dutch called it Autumn Month, the Old Saxons called it Barley Month and in the French Republican calendar it was called the Fruit Month and ran from August 18 to September 16. September is harvest month but it is also often a month of extreme weather. The saying is, "It either dries up wells or breaks down bridges." Still, there is hope. "Fair on September 1st, fair for the month.

September is Alberta's Month of the Artist as well as International Square Dancing Month so enjoy arts and culture. It is also Arthritis Awareness Month, Prostate Cancer Awareness Month and World Alzheimer's Awareness Month.

September 1 is our second official Alberta Day for Alberta became a Canadian province on September 1, 1905. Prior to that it had been part of the Northwest Territories. Be Alberta proud today and enjoy everything Albertan.

September 3, 1962, the Trans Canada Highway was opened by Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. Take a road trip and enjoy the colourful fall scenery.

September 3 – 9, the first week of September, is Suicide Awareness Week, which ends with World Suicide Intervention Day and World Suicide Prevention Day on September 9. We must get involved.

September 4 is Labour Day, the unofficial end of summer. In 1984 Prime Minister John Thompson made Labour Day an official holiday in Canada and we have been celebrating it ever since with BBQs, parades, sporting events, fireworks and everything fun. This is followed by September 5, the International Day of Charity when we all try to be do-gooders.

September 6 is the Hindu celebration of Krishna Janmashtami. It is also read-a-book day so you can read up on other religions.

September 7 is National Salami Day, National Acorn Squash Day and National Beer Day. Enjoy.

September 8 we honour the memory of Queen Elizabeth II, who died at the age of 96 at Balmoral in Scotland a year ago today. She reigned for 70 years and became the longest reigning monarch in British history.

September 10 – 16, the second week in September, is National Organic Food Week. Eat pure to live pure.

September 10, the first Sunday after Labour Day, is celebrated world-wide as Grandparents Day. It began in the U.S. in 1977. Adopt a grandparent for the day if you don't have one.

September 11, U.S. Patriot Day, is the anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy. Say a prayer and light a candle.

September 12 is National Pet Memorial Day and September 14th is Creative Day as well as Doughnut Day.

Mid-September to the end of October is elk breeding season in Alberta. Give them space.

September 16 is Mexico's Independence Day. Celebrate with our favourite Mexican food.

September 16-17 is the Jewish Rosh Hashana, which marks the beginning of a new year in the Hebrew calendar. Celebrations include prayer, ritual foods and a day of rest.

September 17 is Neighbour Day as well as Arbor Day and National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day. September 18 is Equal Pay Day as well as National Cheeseburger Day.

September 18-25 is National Coaches Week. "If you can't do, teach. If you can't teach, manage. If you can't manage, coach. If you can't coach, own." Honour your favourite coach.

The week of September 23 is Alberta Culture Days. Discover. Experience. Celebrate.

September 23 is Autumnal Equinox, the official first day of fall when day and night are equal. If it is warm today, the coming fall weather should be fine.

September 24 – 30 is the Annual Truth and Reconciliation Week. Listen to elders, knowledge keepers, and story tellers. Attend round dances and engage in 'Indigenous learning activities. The week ends with National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as well as Orange Shirt Day on September 30. Wear an orange shirt to honour residential school survivor Phyllis Webstad, who was six when she was taken from her home. And on her first day at the St. Joseph' Mission Residential School near Williams Lake, B.C. was stripped of her new orange shirt.

September 25 is the Jewish Yom Kipper. September 27 is the Islamic Mawlid al Nabi and September 29 is Full Moon, the Harvest Moon or Fruit Moon.

September 28 is Facial Differences Day for those who look different because of accident, illness or birth. Two million Canadians are affected. Look deeper. See their dreams.



# Don't underestimate the rights of the homeless

By John Zapantis

The homeless, who are often stigmatized by people as hopeless and irresponsible whenever coming into fast food eateries typically with suitcases and other personal belongings, give the eatery employees the notion that they have a right to talk down to the down trodden but that unethical attitude is unwarranted.

I should know because I'm one of those many homeless living in Medicine Hat and was previously a caregiver for my ailing parents, both in their nineties,. My position as a caregiver to my parents was jeopardized by a female relative, who decided to have differences with me, so my mother suggested that I find my own place because of these personal differences, forcing me to live homeless on March of 2022. Since then i have lived in Calgary, Red Deer and now, Medicine Hat.

Now that I'm right with them all living under the same roof at the Medicine Hat Mustard SEED, not only do I see these day to day occurrence of the homeless being intentionally ignored, when asking to use an eatery washroom, I got a taste of that unwarranted treatment at another eatery, which I will not name in order to protect the reputation of this establishment.

That walking on egg shells scenario, which I'd like to share with our ASN readers, took place in December of 2022, when I was living in Red Deer and staying at the Red Deer Mustard SEED. I was into my second month of coming into a Red Deer downtown eatery where the homeless cluster together as regulars while hauling in their suitcases on wheels and additional personal belongings. I'd always go to their front counter to order the odd coffee as my morning stimulant that would help to get me ready for my day. There at the front counter was a particular employee, who often make her rounds around the establishments interior, staring down the homeless, but at the same time approaching the working class types, talking to them with a patronizing and polite tone of voice.

I found this to be offensive and the 1st red flag that stood out about her. I was prepared to have her under my radar, watching my back and cautious about how I was going to go about approaching her for whatever it was that was needed.

One morning I came in and ordered my usual coffee. That same lady, who would often come down on the homeless, the one that would often make her rounds, staring them down aggressively and then booting the odd one out for overstaying on a 20 minute time limit, or refusing to allow the odd homeless to use the washroom, was now serving me my ordered coffee.

Not all homeless are innocent and staff has every right to remove someone when warranted for I myself have seen junkies shooting up in washrooms and caught in the act while doing so. So sometimes the people that are being targeted by this woman, and aren't allowed to use these washrooms, might be the very people who have on occasion crossed that line to warrant removal on the part of this woman.

But here is the verdict on how I know that this woman is not always right about her attitude towards some of the homeless. When I was finally served my coffee by her, I immediately went to an adjacent table and started to sip my brew. There inside my cup, I noticed a long black hair. I have black hair and know that it wasn't mine, because I had a two week old buzz cut that told me I was now in the clear and had a valid argument on my hands in returning the cup back to the counter and having this error corrected by management. So what does this idiot do when he is overtired, from not getting proper sleep at the shelter from the night before? I went and dumped my coffee with hair in it into the trash can and then went up to the front counter. I called that same counter lady with the bad attitude and explained to her that I had just found a long black hair in my cup of coffee.

She says out loud in a suspicious tone of voice, "Where is your cup with that black hair inside it.?"

I then realized I'd forgotten to bring the cup with me and had dumped it inside the trash bin. Now, nervous as hell, knowing without the cup as a verified evidence my chances of winning were over, I said nervously, "I accidentally threw it in the trash bin."

She immediately said, "Your lying, I don't believe you." I'm at that point feeling

totally insulted by her allegations and run off at the mouth, "Your judging me now and that's not very good public relations."

At this point she was infuriated by my statement of defence and spoke in a loud, firm, demanding voice, "Leave now, or I'll call the cops."

I then read the riot act to her demanding, "Then go ahead and call the police. When they arrive here, I'll throw section 15 at you of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that stipulates that you can not unlawfully remove me from a public place without just cause. So call them now and I'll tell them to charge you, under section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

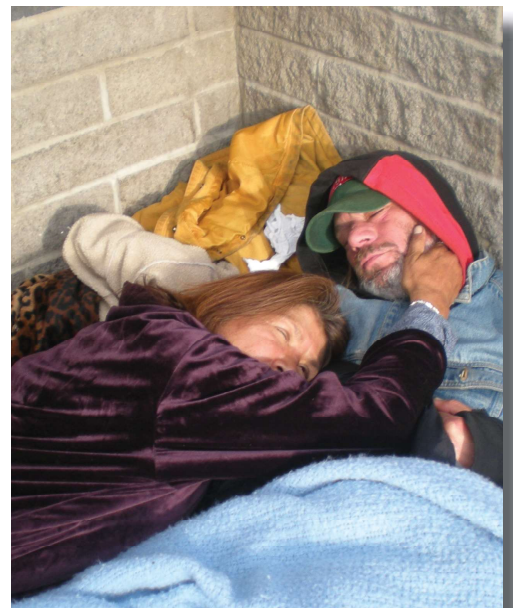
Saved by the bell. She knew exactly what I meant by that and changed her tune quickly. She then threw in the towel and said, 'Ok then, I'll make you another coffee, but be out of here in twenty minutes.'

I agreed and thanked her for serving me the coffee, when it was finally arrived.

It's amazing how quickly the tables turn, when you know what your rights as a homeless person are. Former Canadian Prime minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau established the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Thanks to this reliable legal tool, if it wasn't for this incentive as an immediate tool for resolving legal issues, people like this hardened and power mongering employee, whose often notable for staring down homeless clients, wouldn't think twice about unlawfully removing innocent clients from the premises.

**Homeless.** Photo by Pedro Schultz



# Wages, fairness and pizza

By Timothy Wild

One of the most prevalent myths of our current economic system is that getting, and maintaining, a job is the indisputable key to social and economic wellbeing. There is some truth and comfort to that myth. Many folks do benefit from the fruits of adequately paid employment, and jobs can provide for a measure of security, predictability, and social status. A decent full-time job with good pay and benefits can lead to wellbeing and inclusion. However, this doesn't apply to all. People who are not working in the conventional sense are deemed to be less worthy and less "valuable" commodities in society. Those whose existence is largely outside the work-income nexus are subject to judgement and sub-standard income support and / or replacement. Financial supports are provided in some form or another to people in these categories, but the supports are based on judgmental categories of deserving vs. undeserving, and the income is certainly less than an amount suitable to ensure security, ongoing dignity, and societal participation. Additionally, demonstrating the utter fallacy of the myth, some full-time workers do not enjoy the full

benefits of participation and inclusion.

Our province's risible minimum wage of \$15 per hour does not provide enough for a person to live on. Even the Living Wage, which is an advance at \$22.40 per hour, would only provide income to support a worker and her family to reach the poverty line. Hardly a decent standard of living, particularly when experienced over the long term. This point was clearly made in a paper written by David Macdonald and Ricardo Tranjan, entitled "Can't afford the rent: rental wages in Canada 2022".

Macdonald and Tranjan demonstrate that to meet the costs of market rent and spend less than 30% of their income on housing, workers in Alberta need to earn at least \$21.42 for a one-bedroom rental wage and \$25.37 for a two-bedroom rental wage. Broken down by data from three cities in our province, the rental wage for a one-bedroom apartment in Lethbridge is \$19.62 an hour, Calgary \$24.65 and Edmonton \$20.89. Given the limited stock of affordable housing, even these wages will not guarantee participation in the rental market. Ultimately, the authors correctly argue that "Markets do not solve the problems they create" and note that "the mess in which we find ourselves is due to the

bosses keeping wages down with the help from provincial governments that set minimum the wage and federal governments that control monetary policy."

Wages, then, cannot be the only element of support for workers and our families. This point has been recognized by a broad range of players. Catholic Social Teaching, or example, calls for a family wage, which is "a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently." Recognizing the difficulty in creating various wages for similar jobs based on the size of the family, the Papal Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, argues "Various forms of important social provisions help to bring it about, for example, family subsidies and other contributions for dependent family members and also remuneration for the domestic work done in the home by one of the parents." In other words, a comprehensive public policy approach. This recognition of the broader context of work was also a key element in the creation of the post World War II welfare state. When it became clear that the Allies would eventually win the war, attention turned to post-war reconstruction.

There had been significant political unrest and economic upheaval at the end of World War I and that, together with the experience of the Depression, led politicians and policy makers to consider ideas for more intentional socio-economic responses to the outbreak of peace. This was also supported by the positive experience of the role that Government had played in buffering market failure and smoothing the peaks and troughs of capitalism.

In 1943, Leonard Marsh presented the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction with a Report on Social Security for Canada. The report was based on the notion of full employment within a Keynesian approach to the issues of a "modern industrial economy." Marsh suggested that methods of social insurance be developed to augment the central role of employment, both in cases of non-participation in the market (such as illness, disability and unemployment), but also based on family size and other subjective demands, to maintain at least a social minimum. Unfortunately, and not surprisingly, the Marsh Report was not accepted in a comprehensive manner by the Liberal government of the day. As is the case today, there was deep ideological opposition to the central notion of "full employment" proposed by Marsh. But it provided a clear example, within the complexities of the Canadian Constitution, of how wages can be supplemented by policy initiatives in other areas of existence. And then there are the ongoing calls for some type of guaranteed annual income, regardless

of one's economic participation. The premise is that all people should be afforded supports for a minimal amount of participation, and this can be animated by a basic annual income (CERB or GIS/OAS anyone?).

Opponents argue that it will reward laziness and, more importantly, we can't afford it anyway. Yes, it will be expensive. But the benefits will outweigh the costs, and it will become increasingly necessary for reasons of ecological justice. There are numerous ways, then, to promote overall wellbeing through a range of supports to augment wages. As with all measures promoting greater equity and participation, whether they will be adopted is a political choice. We can choose inclusion or we can choose marginalization. It is a stark, yet simple choice. These days we choose to perpetuate inequality and injustice to ensure the escalation of profit, and other forms of rent-taking. But we can make better choices. As it stands there is a wide range of people, who are employed full time, who are barely making ends meet. The choice to fight inflation at the expense of employment will only increase the impact of this problem. And we need to deal with this from a public policy lens, not based in random acts of bourgeois generosity. A person I love dearly is low paid. Management says that pay within the sector is low due to limited government support. Leaders in the sector are also unwilling to advocate for greater funding for staff for fear that their existing core funding will be harmed. As a result, they "treat" their staff to pizza parties. I love pizza as much as the next pizza lover, but a few slices of a spicy pepperoni pie do not compensate for an adequate and sustainable income.

As with most elements of injustice, they are perpetuated as the result of political choices. Therefore, to offer better choices we need to ensure that the voices of the workers themselves are heard in this debate. This requires an increase in collective action and the promotion of the common good. Folks need to use their collective strength. We also need a party brave enough to break away from the mushy centre and advocate for a true social democracy. Albertans deserve it. Justice demands it. We need concerted political action not pizza.

# A Lesson in Resilience

By Sharon Austin

Dark grey clouds covered the sky and rain splattered against the windshield as Landon pulled up the driveway of the white bungalow. Marissa pulled open the door before he reached the steps. She had been waiting for him and a worried frown pinched her forehead. She stood before him gaunt and white-faced; a shadow of her former self. They had all been through so much after the terrible car accident that took Jaden's life. He had lost a brother; Marissa had lost her husband and Tim had lost his father as well as suffering multiple injuries.

"I do not know how to reach him," Marissa's voice shook as tears glistened in her eyes. "Tim is so depressed that he won't do anything but sit on the couch and play video games. Even his physiotherapist has just about given up. He won't try anymore. Tim says if he can't be the way he was before the accident he doesn't want to go on."

"I'll talk to him," Landon offered feeling her helplessness starting to overwhelm him. It was a hard thing for a seventeen-year-old to go through. One day he was the captain of the basketball team with a sports scholarship to a prestigious college and the next he was a disabled teenager with metal pins in his legs. After surgery and months of therapy he still needed crutches or two canes to walk. The basketball team that had rallied around him and filled his hospital room with flowers and cards slowly drifted away.

He would never be able to run and leap the way he had before. His only friend now was Emmitt, a brilliant classmate who came twice a week as his tutor. After the lessons were finished; they would play video games for hours. It was the only time Marissa got a glimpse of the old Tim's animated face or heard him laugh. Even his girlfriend Emily had slowly drifted away when she realized Tim would not be taking her to the graduation prom.

Tim sat slumped on the couch in a pizza-stained t-shirt and sleep pants. His blonde hair was tousled and his bright blue eyes had lost their former sparkle. He held the game controller limply in his hand as he stared at the flickering screen.

"Hi, Uncle Landon," he said tonelessly,

not even bothering to look up.

"Hi Tim, I'm coming tomorrow to take you out for the day. There are a few places I would like to show you,"

"As long as it's not the mall," Tim said quickly. "I don't want to see anyone from school." He was still very self-conscious about his injuries.

The next day was bright and sunny and Landon had a few ideas that might help Tim to see things in a different light. First, they drove to the nature park where a trail wound into the woods beside a bubbling stream. Tim hobbled along beside him breathing hard from the exertion of walking with his canes.

"Is it much farther?" he whined eyeing the long trail ahead.

"Nope, it's just over that little hill," Landon smiled thinking the fresh air and exercise was just what Tim needed. "I brought you here to see this very special tree," Landon began. "What do you see when you look at it?"

Tim's brow furrowed in anger. "You dragged me all the way out here to see some dumb old tree?"

"It's a tree of resilience," Landon ignored his outburst. "See how it has three trunks growing up to the sky instead of one. Something happened to this tree when it was just a sapling and broke its crown. Instead of giving up, it grew three trunks out of the broken stump. Now it has a larger canopy of leaves than all the other trees."

Tim was not impressed. "I get it Uncle Landon but let's go now, I'm tired."

Tim turned and started the long trek back to the car.

"That did not go well," Landon thought as he drove to the next stop in his plan. He pulled the car up to the doors of the University Sports Center. Tim trailed after him as they made their way down the long hall to the gym. Inside, a wheelchair basketball game was in full swing. The athletes raced around the gym in their specialized wheelchairs as they dribbled the ball. Cheers rang out as the ball dropped gracefully through the hoop and bounced on the polished floor.

Landon's friend Alex wheeled over; his paralyzed legs strapped tightly in the chair. Sweat beaded his forehead and traced down his cheek to his red beard. Alex had heard all about Tim and he was overly enthusiastic.

"Hey Tim," he said heartily, "I hear you are a real basketball star. We would love to

have you on the team. It's not so different once you get the hang of it. We have a real shot at going to the Olympics next year. Wouldn't that be amazing?"

As Alex hurried to rejoin the game Landon turned to Tim and saw something akin to terror in his eyes.

"Can we go," Tim whispered hoarsely in a strangled voice; his face drained of colour. Landon hurried them back to the car realizing that he had been wrong again for Tim was not ready to accept that his life had changed. The sight of so many young men with disabilities playing wheelchair basketball had really upset him. He would have to find his own way in his own time.

Tim stared out the side window deep in thought until they arrived at the drive-through restaurant.

"Your friend is nice," he said at last, "But I would never want to be on their team."

They ate their burgers in silence and Landon felt defeated as he drove Tim home.

Two weeks later Marissa called all excited. "My prayers have been answered. Something good has finally happened for Tim. Can you come right over?" As Landon rounded the corner, he saw tall lanky Emmitt and Tim throwing a ball for a big black lab. Tim was laughing and hobbling as fast as he could without his canes. As the dog leaped high in the air to catch the ball, Landon realized he was missing a front leg.

Marissa hurried to meet him. "Isn't it wonderful to see Tim so happy and trying so hard. Emmitt's family fosters dogs and he brings Mando with him every day. That dog is so joyful and he doesn't let his missing leg hold him back. He has done wonders for Tim's attitude and we are going to adopt him."

Tim hurried over with high colour in his cheeks and Mando followed close at his heels. "He is a great dog, Uncle Landon. He is very smart and he can do all kinds of tricks. I've been walking him in the nature park every day."

The old sparkle was back in Tim's bright blue eyes. Landon smiled to himself as he thought he had tried and failed to show Tim the meaning of resilience but the big black dog had shown the way. Tim would find his own way in his own time.



# Some Labour Day Riddles

**By Joanne Bengier**

Q. What do you call a corner store owner who keeps gaining weight? A. A grow-sir (grocer).

Q. What do you call something contagious at the office? A. A staff infection.

Q. Why do truck drivers make such good husbands? A. They are in it for the long haul.

Q. How did the auctioneer leave? A. Going, going, gone.

Q. How does a barber avoid falling hair? A. He steps aside.

Q. Why does the chauffeur have such warm feet? A. It is shoe-fur.

Q. What do you call a cobra working for the government? A. A civil serpent.

Q. What is the difference between the person who hires you and a kiss? A. One's a boss, the other is a buss.

Q. What old car was a good name for de pastry chef? A. Stew, de baker.

Q. What's a good name for ze-ethnic cab driver? A. Tack-ze-driver.

Q. Why did the beekeeper check everything twice? A. You can never bee two careful.

Q. Why did the dentist go to Panama? A. To research the route canal.

Q. Why are truckers so rich? A. They are loaded.

Q. Why are some offices warmer than other rooms? A. They are off the ice. (off ice).

Q. How is a bankrupt man like a politician? A. Both introduce bills into the house.

# Mary solves Economic Problems

**By Joanne Bengier**

1. In July the government gave a one-time Grocery Rebate to Canada's poorest eleven million people because food inflation was up to 9% and the Liberals wanted to keep all Canadians eating.

2. Those eleven million poor people didn't even have to grovel and apply for the money. If they had sent in income tax returns the money was just quietly snuck into their bank accounts with no one the wiser. The poor could keep their pride and eat.

3. Amounts varied but I heard a single person got an average of \$225 and a couple got about \$76 more for a total of \$301. This confused me. Why does the second person in a shared accommodation eat so little? I checked with a married neighbour and she said her husband eats even more than she does. Good for you, Mr. Eating man.

4. Still the government can't be wrong so in most cases two must eat much cheaper than one. This gave me the idea for government saving. On my street alone six ladies live alone. On another street perhaps six men live alone. If the government paired up singles it would cost them \$301 a couple instead of \$450 for two singles. That's a win.

5. When two singles moved in together and shared one house the government would have to give only one fuel rebate instead of two this winter. That's a win-win.

6. When two singles joined to make one couple they would free up a house. There would be so many emptied houses it would solve both the housing shortage and the rental shortage and hopefully there would be enough empty houses left over to house the homeless. We would no longer need homeless shelters. That's a win-win.

7. Now a cold winter is coming so we need a one-time Parka rebate so those poor Canadians won't freeze. The danger is that if all 11 million are fearful of more dock strikes and shortages they might all go out the first day to panic buy parkas. There would be a great parka shortage.

8. The government would then have to pass a law limiting parka ownership to one per person to prevent parka hoarding. To enforce this law they would have to hire Parka Police who would go door to door checking closets for surplus illegal parkas. So many Parka Police would be needed there would be a job for every unemployed Canadian. Both the parka rebate and the Parka Police would be financed through money raised from fines collected from the parka hoarders plus money made from selling confiscated parkas.

9. We would then have a nation of well-fed people warmly dressed in parkas, all employed and neatly



Left: A Northern Flicker looking for ants, a common food source of this hungry bird in Medicine Hat Alberta.

Photo By John Zapantis

# Medicine Hat Transit finds and returns my cap

By John Zapantis

Medicine Hat Transit drivers are not only courteous and efficient when getting you to your appointed destinations, but you can bet the farm, they're also a great relay team, when getting the message out to other drivers that your lost item is riding with them!

That I can attest, after having had a long distance discussion with my 92 year old mother who mentioned at one point during our phone discussion that she was starting to miss me a lot, while I was living away from home in Edmonton and now living homeless in Medicine Hat.

While riding Southbound on the Medicine Hat Transit bus 46 towards Southview Mall, I happily disembarked off the transit, feeling great about the five minute phone discussion I had with my mom and excited about my plans for going back to Edmonton soon, after living homeless for the last 16 months in Calgary, Red Deer and now Medicine Hat.

While walking away from that departing bus, I noticed that something wasn't quite right and then realized that my baseball cap that was tucked under my armpit while I was talking with my mother from my cell phone was now joy riding along with the bus driver that just finished letting me off, at my chosen destination.

Now instead of going for that usual afternoon break in between my writing assignment for Alberta Street News and that coffee break that always follows at Tim Horton's in the Southview Community of South Medicine Hat, I decided to wait for the nearest bus from across the street to come by so that I could get their

driver to dispatch the bus that I had been riding on, informing them that I accidentally lost my black cap in hopes of having it returned safely.

I'd estimate a half an hour had gone by and a Number 30 bus picked me up at Southview. I explained to the driver that my black cap was riding as a runaway on the previous bus number 46 that I had been riding.

My next destination was going to be the Medicine Hat Mall, which would take about a three minute drive to get to.

When our bus arrived there I stepped off. One of the three Transit drivers that were parked in front of that mall was one of the female bus drivers that I knew from previous trips, whose name I will not mention for privacy purposes, was driving the number 53 bus.

I asked her to dispatch the number 46, to tell that previous driver that my black cap was left on his bus

She got on her radio and after a one minute conversation with that driver, she confirmed in return to me that he changed his bus number from 46 to the South Hill 22 and that he had found the cap and he would be waiting to return my cap at the downtown terminal, as soon as I transferred over to the bus 31, while on my way to retrieve my returned cap.

When I boarded bus number 31 our bus then headed off for downtown and within about 20 minutes we were now entering the downtown bus terminal where I now noticed the bus number 22 waiting on the right side of the curb accompanied by the waiting driver, whom I originally rode with, who was ready to hand over my cap as soon as I got off this bus.

I ran off that bus heading quickly towards the waiting driver, who happened to be seated in his driver's chair. I boarded quickly and was handed my cap by the smiling driver.

I thanked him for his time, effort, patience and mentioned to him that

I'd be doing a future commendable story about my panicky experience and how his professional team of Medicine Hat's 'Finest' did a great job of working together in pin pointing the runaway location of my black cap and return it safely to me.

First I'd like to thank Eric, who drove the route 46 bus 46, and that female driver from Bus 53, who suggested that I not use her personal name for this story. She did a great job in encouraging the driver of bus 46 that later transitioned to bus 22 and waited at the downtown terminal to return it to me.

Also a thank you to bus driver, Jamie, who was driving the number 31 that drove me to the downtown bus terminal, where I later got off to retrieve my cap.

You are all not only compassionate and courteous Medicine Hat Transit bus drivers, but wonderful human beings that need to be commended for treating me humanly just the same!

## Bus driver returned lost child

By Linda Dumont

My grandson, Josh, was a very active, and nearly two years old. One afternoon, when he was supposed to be napping, he sneaked out of his bedroom window and was gone. My daughter phoned in a panic. We looked up and down the street then headed for the near by Edmonton LRT station, which was swarming with people because it was a game night.

I went to customer service and described Josh in detail - he was wearing an orange plaid jacket and jeans, blonde with curly hair...

We looked around hopelessly, knowing that in the swarming crowd there was little chance of finding him. Minutes passed, while we imagined all sorts of things that could happen to a lost child. Then the customer services woman said, "We have found him."

Josh had followed people onto a bus. When the driver reached the end of his route, there he was sitting all alone. The driver bought him a bag of Cheezies, and



# A tankard of October

By Joanne Bengler

It's October in both old Dutch and Old English. It was Wine Month and on the French Revolutionary Calendar it was Time of Vintage and ran from September 22 to October 21. The best ale was brewed in October and it was referred to as "A tankard of October". The name October comes from octo, 8, for it was the eighth month of the Roman calendar. October is Women's History Month, Foster Family Month, Small Business Month, Cyber Security Month and Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The first week of October is Read-in-Week. Read silently or aloud and alone or in groups. Just read.

Watch the weather as you make winter plans. "A warm October makes a cold February." "If October brings much frost and wind, then are January and February mild." "Much rain in October means much rain in December."

October 1 is National Seniors Day, October 2 is World Farm Animal Day as well as Name Your Car Day and October 4 is World Animal Day.

October 5 is World Teachers Day as well as Do Something Nice Day. October 6 is Public Media Giving Day when you give to help keep public TV on the air.

October 7 - 8 is the Jewish Shemini Atzeret followed by Shimchat Toral on October 8.

October 9 the turkey gobbles. It is Canadian Thanksgiving Day as well as Indigenous Peoples Day, Columbus Day and Native American Day in various areas of the U.S. Happy Thanksgiving Day.

October 10 is World Mental Health Day as well as National Angel Cake Day. Enjoy.

October 11 is Take Your Teddy Bear to Work Day as well as National Day of the Girl. Celebrate daughters. October 14 is National Dessert Day. Eat your dessert first.

October 15 - 23 is the Hindu Sharad Navarati. October 16 is the Bahai Birth of the Bab. October 20 is the Sikh Installation of Scriptures as Guru Granth. October 24 is the Hindu Dasara.

October 15 is International Day of Rural Women. October 16 is World Food Day. October 17 is Eradication of Poverty Day. If we help rural women produce food, we will eradicate poverty for them and they in turn will help feed the world. October 15 is also Day of Defenders in the Ukraine.

October 16 is National Feral Cat Day in the U.S. Cats that ran free all summer are now looking for warm winter homes.

October 17, 2018 Marijauna became legal in Canada. October 17 is also Wear Something Gaudy Day. Webster's Dictionary says, "That is gaudy which is ostentatiously or tastelessly gay or showy, especially in colour."

October 18 is Persons Day in recognition of the Famous Five. Judge Emily Murphy felt her greatest achievement was a successful crusade in 1929 to have women legally declared to be persons just like men.

October 19 is Evaluate Your Life Day. Instead of competing with others compete with yourself and try to be better every day.

October 21 is Count Your Buttons Day. Boys used to count buttons to see their future - Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor,

doctor, lawyer, engine chief, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief. Girls used the same rhyme to see who they would marry. Buttons were also counted out like flower petals as in He loves me, he loves me not, and used to answer questions with, Yes, no, maybe so.

October 22 is National Nut Day. Enjoy your favourite nuts today. That is followed by National Bologna Day on October 24. Snobs refer to slices of bologna as round steak. Enjoy.

October 28 is Full Moon, the Aboriginal Falling Leaf or Travelling Moon.

October 30, the night before Halloween, is called Mischief Night, Trick Night or Cabbage Night in different parts of the U.S. Let the fun begin. October 31 is Halloween when we use humour and ridicule to confront the reality of death with ghosts, goblins, vampires and the like. This is the holiday when the most candy is bought and the favourite treats of trick-or-treaters are Reeses Peanut Butter Cups, Skittles, Kit-Kat, Snickers and M&Ms, according to foodnetwork.ca. Happy Halloween.

## Mary's Thanksgiving Thankfulness

By Joanne Bengler

Thanksgiving is the time when the whole family gets together and each of us is thankful to be the smartest, best looking and most successful of the lot. I am so thankful I don't look like her, think like him or have the inherited family nose like those two. I am so thankful that I turned out so well that I can be kind to all my less fortunate relatives. Still, I can't help wondering if some of them are so kind to me for the same reason.

I am so thankful we have the in-laws to blame when things go wrong and the family circle closes in.

I am so thankful I have a good digestion so I can eat all the strange and awful pot luck foods that turn up. Some cooks act offended if people don't eat the wonderful food they have spent so many hours preparing so I eat some of everything. I am so thankful they invented Tums so I can sample everything and compliment the cooks knowing there will be relief when the ordeal of eating Thanksgiving dinner is over.

I am so thankful I have strong nerves and patience so I can survive the crowding, the noise, the spills and the unintended insults. I am so thankful things calmed down and we didn't have to call the police like those people on the TV news.

I am so thankful Thanksgiving only comes once a year and I have survived another one and amazingly the other family members have survived, too.

I am so thankful we have Thanksgiving because it makes me appreciate the rest of the year and my quiet rather boring life.

I am so thankful I can say Happy Thanksgiving to all my friends and family and strangers alike and be wished a Happy Thanksgiving in return. It may seem like an endurance test but we all emerge feeling happy and thankful that we have family to celebrate Thanksgiving with. Happy thanksgiving one and all!

# History of the Werewolf

By Joanne Benger

Fear of werewolves, also spelled werewolfs, is very ancient. The mythical werewolf has existed in most cultures in some form throughout the ages. The name werewolf comes from the English wer (man) plus wolf and literally means man-wolf. Webster's dictionary defines a werewolf as "a person thought capable of taking on the form of a wolf." In other cultures hyenas, leopards and tigers had the same role as the wolf and men could be transformed into them. In England when the population grew and wolves became extinct, it was cats that took on the role of transforming themselves into witches and back again.

The werewolf we are familiar with has deep roots in Roman mythology. Ovid told of how king Lycaon of Arcadia was turned into a wolf after he tested the divinity of Jupiter. Herodius wrote about the Neuri, who would become wolves once a year and Pliny told us about the Anteus family where lots were drawn once a year to see which member would become a wolf for the next nine years. The Romans brought their mythology to England and Ireland's patron saint, Saint Patrick, reportedly transformed the king of Wales, Veriticus, into a wolf.

Werewolves were taken seriously throughout Europe and the French inquisition recorded 30,000 cases between 1520 and 1630. Silver bullets entered the werewolf story in 1610 when the German town of Greifswald was overrun with werewolves. Ordinary musket shells had no effect upon them but some students melted down silver to make pure silver musket balls and saved the town.

Then werewolves and other supernatural beings simply vanished for centuries. I was puzzled until I reread the 1975 book, *Something More* by Catherine Marshall. She wrote that in 1972 Oz Guinness "researched the new interest in witchcraft, the occult and kindred subjects. He could find almost no major works on those subjects for the last two hundred years. History books treated black magic and the occult as curious extinct phenomena, the Enlightenment followed by the Renaissance, together with the rise of modern scientific knowledge had ef-

fectively silenced the witches and laid the ghosts. Then in 1967, like the cap blown off a volcano, there erupted into the open a torrent of publications.

That was when supernatural beings, including werewolf, reentered our world through best-selling novels and popular Hollywood movies. The werewolf that we are familiar with is a hybrid that is made up of old myths plus modern imagination. The mythology that surrounds the werewolf is constantly evolving and changing but it is generally agreed that you might become a werewolf if you drink water that a wolf had stepped in, you sleep under a full moon on a Friday, you are born on Christmas eve, you are born out of wedlock, you sell your soul to the devil, you make a pact with the devil, you are cursed by the Gods, you use magic creams, a witch casts a spell upon you, you wear a wolf skin coat or belt, you eat wolf meat or you are bitten by a werewolf at Full Moon. Then, even the most mild mannered man will become a werewolf and roam at night devouring babies and exhumed corpses. Some say that it is impossible to detect a werewolf when transformed into a man but others insist you can tell if someone is a werewolf because he will have a unibrow, he will have hairy palms and flat fingers and he will have a ring finger that is longer than his index finger.

Some insist that the only permanent cure for werewolves is death preferably brought on by a silver bullet that has been blessed by a priest. For the less blood-thirsty it has been suggested that you can transform a werewolf back into the man he was by simply calling out the Christian name by which he was baptized a total of three times.

## Have a Safe and Happy Halloween

By Joanne Benger

The following information was collected from a variety of unreliable sources, who wish to remain anonymous. Use at your own risk.

1. Witches ride broomsticks because they are scared of horses. Hang a horseshoe at

your door to scare off witches.

2. Place a jack-o-lantern containing a lighted candle outside the door to frighten away any evil spirits wandering about on Halloween night.

3. If a girl peels an apple in one long peel and hangs the peel on a nail just inside the front door it will shape itself into the initial of her lover when he enters the door.

4. Put a tray of sand on the floor midway between the front and back doors to record the ghostly footprints of unseen visitors.

5. Hang knobs of garlic on the door for protection and a nice Halloween atmosphere. Decorate window with garlic and small crosses and cover all mirrors to prevent them from becoming portals. Place red berries on every window sill and keep a cross and holy water close by.

6. It was once believed the souls of the departed came back to visit their old homes on Halloween night. Dress in costumes so they won't recognize you and use noise-makers to scare them off.

7. Do native smudging to purify and clear people and areas from negative thoughts.

8. Burn sage to cleanse your house and say, "Only good and positive energy can occupy this space."

9. For protection say the ancient prayer, "Dear Lord, Protect me from Ghoulies and ghosties and long legged beasties and things that go bump in the night."

10. Stand on the steps to hand out Halloween Treats. Never invite trick-or-treaters into your house just in case. Once you invite evil in, it can enter at will afterwards with no invitation.

11. If you think the costume is real and he might really be a vampire, scatter grains of rice or sand across his path. Vampires are obsessed with counting small things and while he is counting you can make your get away.

12. If you fear that costumed man is really an evil spirit, distract him by offering a gift of something black, then get away as fast as you can.

13. If you suspect your guest might be a real witch, put walnuts under her chair. Is she a witch, they will rob her of all power of movement.

14. Swing a pendulum. If it swings clockwise it is indicting the presence of a spirit that has not crossed over.

15. If frightened say, "Michael the arch angel, defend me in battle." Say prayers or recite poetry to free your mind.



16. When your guests leave do not watch them go for the Crow tribe believed that if you do not watch a person go, the evil spirits cannot follow his trail and he'll return to visit you again soon.

17. According to superstition if a girl eats salted herring before she goes to bed Halloween night her future partner (or the spirit of her future partner) will appear with a glass of water.

18. On Halloween at midnight if a girl sits in front of a mirror with candles lit, eating an apple and combing her hair and asks who she will marry he will appear behind her.

19. 4:15 a.m. is the witching hour when witches awake and join one another. Stay awake and see who is walking about at this time.

20. On the day after Halloween count the buttons on the coat of the first person you meet and find your fortune for the coming year. 1- good fortune, 2 – a light heart, 3 - a carriage, 4 - a cart, 5, a new dress, 6 – a new hat, 7- a pet dog, 8 -a pet cat, 9 -a letter, 10 - a pleasure, 11 - a great joy, 12 - a treasure.



**Above: A red shafted northern flicker woodpecker looks down on the ground for ants, considered one of its favourite food sources, under a freeway in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Photo by John Zapantis**

**Below: A family of three red deer pay a visit to the Strathcona Centre located on Washington Street South East in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Photo by John Zapantis**





# Medicine Hat Mustard SEED great at solving problems

By John Zapantis

The homeless, who have been known to seek the support of the many Mustard SEED shelters throughout Western Canada, are always given the essential roof over their heads, three meals a day, showering facilities and toiletries, a dorm to sleep in and other additional supports that will eventually determine their eligibility in securing housing, once the time arises so they can move on in life to living in a normal living environment.

I've got to really hand it to the staff at the Medicine Hat Mustard SEED, who really have helped to make that big difference for me, while I was staying at their facility since first landing there from Red Deer the end of May of this year. At times, I often wondered if some of its staff were actually listening to me, while giving them a run down on what my issues were with some of its unruly homeless dwellers, but that soon changed when they one day answered to the call.

That staff's concerns about my wellbeing finally materialized, when one evening one of the guys sleeping adjacent from me had his hi-fi turned on loud enough for me to hear it. He had this music turned on that was more less mellow, but again irritable enough to disrupt my attempts at trying to fall asleep, when the dorms lights were turned off at 10 p.m. every evening. I turned over to him to my right and politely asked him if he could turn that music off but to no avail. He ignored my plea. I again asked him to turn that music off and again he ignored my request. Then I asked him again the third time and he continued to ignore me.

I decided to go to the staff's office up on the second floor to file my complaint. When I got up there, I explained to one of the African staff members that each time

I asked the guy on the cot next to me to turn off that hi-fi of his, he refused, Then I asked the staff member to tell the guy to shut off his system because it was interfering with my efforts to fall asleep.

The staff member agreed to come down those stairs to accost the man with his music on. I soon pointed out the disturber and went right to my cot to lie down. The staff member called out his name, and after calling him by his name a few more times as his voice got louder each time because it took a few more calls to get the man to respond to the staff member's demands. The staff member told him to shut off his music because he was interfering with everyone's sleep in our dorm.

The guy finally shut off his music and everything was professionally resolved thanks to the staff member's concerns in resolving this issue peacefully.

The next evening I was again experiencing the same problems with the guy to my right sleeping adjacent from me who again had his wi fi turned on loud enough for me to hear it. That interfered with my attempts to get some sleep so I asked him to turn off that music, but despite my polite requests, he continued to ignore me like the night prior. Then I went up to the second floor and asked a different staff member on duty to accost this guy next to my matt to tell him to turn off the music. I also explained to this white staff member that the same guy, was the one who had me reporting him the night prior about his wi-fi interrupting my sleep, after asking him three times to turn it off, but each time I asked him, he continually ignored me like I wasn't even there.

I was then in for a rather rude awakening after the

staff member explained to me that the music that was playing from the guy's wi-fi served as a means of relaxing him and that it helped him sleep better. I challenged the staff member on this theory and told him that my ability to sleep was being violated. The staff member then continued to jump to he man's defence, when I said that the African gentlemen the night before jumped to my defence and went out of his way in telling this roommate to turn off the music because it was evident to the staff member that his music was loud enough and intrusive in interfering with my efforts to get the sleep that was needed.

Despite my valid claim, the white staff member told me that the guy, who was interfering with my sleep, said that he never had the music turned on loud enough for me to hear, and that he had his ear plugs attached to his wi-fi, therefore making it impossible for anyone in the room to hear it from where he was situated, which I found deceptive on behalf of the adjacent room mates claim. So the staff member then told me there was nothing he could do but I challenged the staff members claim.

I then said, 'How about asking that tall African gentlemen, who went to bat for me and heard that music loud enough to insist that the guy sleeping next to me shut that music off. It wouldn't hurt to ask him, He'll vouch for me by telling you the same story.'

The staff member said there was nothing he could do and then came up with his



**Right: ASN Media Relations Coordinator/  
Reporter John Zapantis standing in front of  
Medicine Hat City Hall.  
Photo By Martine Wells**

version of solving the problem altogether by having me moved to another room away from this deceitful and annoying roommate.. That night I was forced to move to another room where I slept for two nights in a row.

The next evening I happened to walk by that trouble maker and had some words for him, I said, as we were passing by one another on the second floor in the hallway, "Why are you lying to staff about having those ear plugs on, claiming that the music wasn't on that kept interfering with my sleep?"

He replied by waving me off as I could hear a muffled mumbling from him that wasn't audible at the time.

The staff saw our confrontation and called us both into a separate room for a sit down in resolving this ongoing tension. We each had a turn explaining our side of the story. One staff member asked him if he had his music turned on loud enough

to distract my attempts in getting my sleep, but he denied it and said that he had his ear plugs on. I said that wasn't so and he just flipped me the bird, in other words showing me his index finger. I followed his vulgar gesture with an angered reply, "You're lying."

The one staff member intervened and said, "That's enough you two."

I then further challenged the staff by assuring them that if they really needed to have my claim substantiated that they should check with that Black African staff member, who witnessed this man's breach in interfering with my sleep, and the claim would finally be put to rest.

The meeting was over, but the problem wasn't resolved until the next day, when I ran into that Black African staff member and told him to vouch for me to staff by telling them that this guy, who lied to them about having his ear phones on, should be accosted and dealt with.

Well, the African staff member finally got the word out to staff about what he had witnessed by telling them about my side of the story and as a result I was moved back into my original room and the liar was finally brought to justice and told to move out of my dorm. My regular sleeping hours were finally restored back to normal working order.

Justice was finally served! Thanks to the mediation that was undertaken by the staff at the Mustard SEED, a shelter that not only provides the amenities of a roof over everyone's head, three meals a day, a showering facility and the toiletries to keep you clean and a good nights sleep, but has staff, who are qualified to resolve heated issues whenever someone is the victim of a perpetrator whose intentions are to interfere with someone's sleep in crossing that line and inevitably getting caught in a lie! I thank them for a job well done.

## Homeless in Edmonton

By Linda Dumont

The latest homeless count by Home-ward Trust indicates more than 2,700 people in Edmonton are experiencing homelessness with about 1,317 of them sleeping in emergency shelters or outside every night. In the downtown core there are homeless encampments with tents and makeshift shelters in vacant lots and along the streets. Due to a large number of complaints, in July the city had 1,200 homeless people removed from where they were camping, but this only serves to have them moved elsewhere to another location where they can camp until they are forced to move again.

In response the climbing number of homeless people, the city opened a new shelter in the west end last January. An old hotel is being used to house people, who don't have a safe place to shelter. The Jasper Place Wellness Centre is operating the shelter after having received permission from Talltree First Nations, the owner of the Bedford Inn and Suites and \$7.5 million from the City of Edmonton. By mid February the entire 209 spaces were filed.

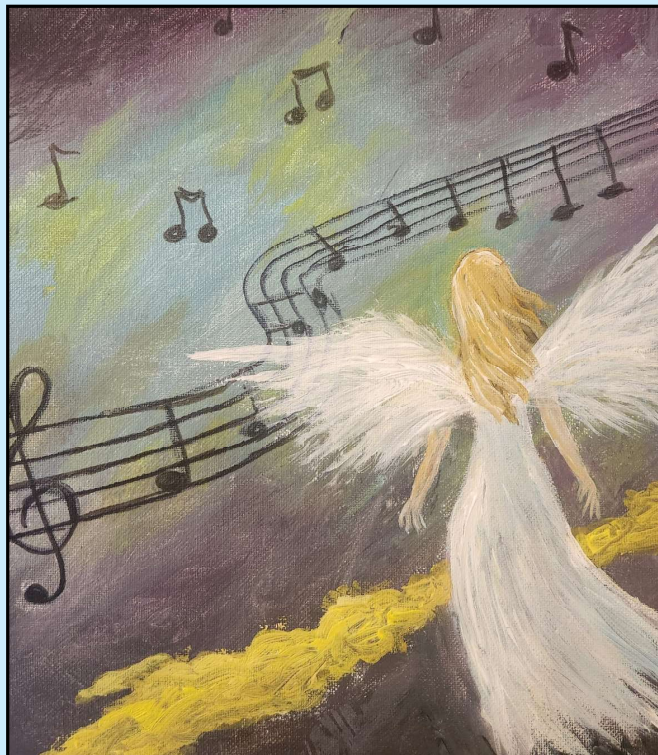
Jasper Place Wellness Centre said that 62 per cent of the people they serve are Indigenous so the partnership with the Talltree First Nations has opened the door for Indigenous leaders to take control of

how the shelter is operated and to create cultural space on site.

The number of homes people is increasing as rising rental costs make housing out of reach for many people. Even with the opening of the west end shelter, there are only 627 permanent shelter spaces that leaves many people with no option but to sleep in the rough. A lot of people stick close to downtown and the river valley camping in places like Dawson Park, Kin-naird Park, and near the Shaw Conference

Centre, but people are setting up refuges as far out as Anthony Henday Drive and there are a number of sites with homeless encampments alongside major traffic arteries.

211 can be called if you see anyone experiencing an emergency situation, passed out on the street, or in need of help. 211 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Their members are completely non-judgmental and provide access to community programs and service information.



### Flow

The Mustard Seed Seeds of Hope artists have been invited to show their artwork on the theme of Flow at the Highlands Library from September 10 to November 30, 2023.

Left: Flow of Music by Linda Dumont is one of the paintings that will be displayed.



# Housing for the People: “Like the air we breathe, housing is a basic human need”

By Darin Thomas

In the latest instalment of INSP's Housing for the People column, Darin Thomas, a participant in The Stewpot's weekly Writers' Workshop at Dallas, Texas street paper STREETZine, talks about coming to terms with the fact that he was not to blame for the trauma and violence he experienced as a young boy.

In 2021, I was sentenced to county jail for theft and possession of a controlled substance. After six months there, I was sent to Gateway Foundation in Lancaster, Texas.

The six months I spent at Gateway opened my eyes to new realities and how to live again. The experience showed me how to be a better person. I worked on having the power to change my life, how to be a man, and how to help others. Working with others helps me be stronger and do better in my choices.

I especially worked on learning how to forgive. Forgiveness was a big eye-opener for me. My father murdered my mother when he poured gasoline on her and shot her twice.

I was nine-years-old. I hated him for so many years. Therapists and

counselors at Gateway helped me learn how to start forgiving him and others. I had to stop blaming myself and others for my mother's death and what went wrong in my life.

I thought about these parts of my life while I was receiving treatment at other places. But the treatment at Gateway was best. The people I worked with taught me how to go deep into my soul. My fellow inmates and I learned how to share each other's experiences. We talked about how to change our lives. I wouldn't be where I am without my counselors.

Now, I am using the skill of learning to forgive to help other people think about what they have been through. I love giving people a chance to learn about what happened to me, about my mother's death, and my father being sentenced to prison for 50 years for her murder.

I feel very good that I forgave my dad and other people who have harmed me. You have got to forgive people who harm and hurt you.

I have lived through a lot, but I know now how to move on. I love my brother and sisters for holding on. We all saw our mother's death. We took it differently, but we stayed together, including when our oldest sister died last spring. Losing her was crazy because I didn't expect her to die so young.

This is all about the power to do something different, including helping other people in their lives and making the world a better place. Sharing my

experiences with others who have gone through something similar, and redirecting our lives, feels so good.

Now I watch what I eat and take better care of myself. I walk and exercise regularly. My health is good and I take my meds and treat my life more seriously.

Previously, my health problems were my death sentence. High blood pressure. Diabetes. I didn't care anything about my health or myself. I had to want help. One day, I thought: “I am slowly killing myself”. I looked in the mirror and didn't like what I saw: skin and bones. I saw I needed help. At one time, I didn't care about taking my meds or eating right. I also was sick on drugs.

You can change, too. But don't let it get too late. Take care of yourself so you can live longer. Watch what you eat. Stay focused on yourself. If you want help, it's out there.

And believe you can get better. If people want help, they will get help. And if they don't, they won't.

Part of caring for myself is taking advantage of my new apartment. For the better part of a decade, I was without housing. I stayed with friends and family across Dallas. I slept on couches and sometimes on the streets. I kept things at my sister's. It wasn't cool.

My new apartment has a bedroom, living room, and nice kitchen. I feel joy about being in my own place again. Keeping my housing means everything to me. I want to live again.

This means having a job where I can pay my rent on time. It means keeping people out of the place who don't belong there. And it means living my life well.

As 2023 unfolds, my new place, my new life, my new job and my relationship with God will allow me to keep living well.

a participant in The Stewpot's weekly Writers' Workshop in Dallas, Texas, and a contributor to the city's street paper STREETZine.





# Housing emergency: Edmon- ton advocates urge Alberta parties to promise action on housing and homelessness “Most people living in poverty now face significant challenges ... a better supply of more affordable housing is especially critical”

By Lauren Boothby

Advocates urged Alberta political party leaders to promise action on the province’s “housing emergency” in an open letter ahead of May’s provincial election.

The Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) says provincial leaders haven’t prioritized housing issues and parties need to make pledges that recognize adequate and affordable housing is a right for individuals and a benefit for communities, and that Alberta has substantially more provincial money for affordable housing, stronger legal protections and support for renters, creation of a Ministry of Housing and a provincial housing advocate, better housing-related support for municipalities, and making ending homelessness a priority are some requests.

The long list of requests may seem challenging to undertake, the group said, but it argues this is necessary after decades of under investment by provincial and federal governments.

“The cost of housing has far outstripped increases in incomes. Most people living in poverty now face significant challenges ... a better supply of more affordable housing is especially critical. The rapid financialization of rental housing by investment bodies has made the crisis worse. Something is broken and housing is the needed repair,” the letter states.

“We are confident the financial cost of the actions we seek will more than pay for itself. And the positive social results for all Albertans from actions that support the significance of having a safe secure affordable place to call home will pay generous dividends long into the future.” ECOHH chairwoman Nadine Chalifoux said Alberta isn’t spending enough on truly

affordable housing. Much of the money spent recently on near-market housing isn’t meeting the needs, and existing laws aren’t protecting renters, she said.

“The problem has grown so large that we are out of control and we need so much housing ... You need all three levels of government to coordinate together to help abolish homelessness and create a sustainable affordable housing system,” she said in an interview. “Our tenants are not protected by an act, are not protected by the government.”

Spending \$600 million annually on affordable housing for 10 years, ending transfers of existing social housing stock to other owners, prioritizing funding of not-for-profit or cooperative housing and accessible homes, ensuring funded housing projects can proceed, and creating and maintaining a public inventory of housing and shelter needs are on the list.

More resources for homelessness prevention, evaluating barriers and gaps in current programs, better tracking of deaths related to homelessness, an expert review of emergency shelters, strategies to address poverty, and comprehensive plans for shelters during the winter are other requests.

“Every year it seems there’s a new plan, but it comes out a month before winter hits,” Chalifoux said. “There’s no need for that. It isn’t rocket science ... you need to have a non-bandaid solution.”

More help is needed. Edmonton Mayor Amarjeet Sohi has also been advocating for the province to spend more money locally on this file.

“Since being elected, I have advocated for housing not only as a human right, but as a sound investment for the long-term wellbeing of our city,” he said in a statement.

This includes requests to raise the number of 24/7 permanent shelter beds to 1,250, add 70-100 bridge housing units, and financially help shelters put Edmonton’s minimum standards in place. Sohi also hopes Alberta will deliver municipal funding for a list of housing projects in the upcoming budget including 550 supportive housing units, 10,600

new affordable housing units renting at a deep discount, and 38,320 new units with shallow subsidies.

The Alberta government didn’t give any indication more funding or a change in approach is being considered at this time beyond what has already been announced when asked for a response to ECOHH’s letter.

In an email Hunter Baril, press secretary to Seniors, Community and Social Services Minister Jeremy Nixon, said the province’s current affordable housing strategy “lays a clear outline that shows our focus on supporting individuals and families with housing that meets their needs,” pointing to the province’s recently updated affordable housing plans.

“The steps we are taking to expand affordable and accessible housing are making a real difference for individuals, families and communities across Alberta. With recent funding announcements including a combined \$187 million to address homelessness, mental health and addiction challenges, Albertans can see a government invested in solutions.”

The province temporarily upped funding for 450 more winter shelter spaces in Edmonton last year.

How Alberta’s official Opposition plans to respond to this issue isn’t yet clear. Spokesperson for the Alberta NDP, Benjamin Alldritt, said the party is working on its housing policy ahead of the election and he’s hopeful ECOHH’s concerns will be addressed by it. No specifics were available.

Below: Two people sleep on a warm air exhaust grate outside the Law Courts building in Edmonton on Jan. 27, 2023. Photo by David Bloom



# Thanks to Royal Bank's employees

## Charlene and Jocelyn for processing my permanent debit card

By John Zapantis

Banking seems to typically be about withdrawing and making deposits when looking after your banking needs. Sometimes bank tellers can make that big difference when renewing a permanent bank debit card that was ordered for me by two female Medicine Hat Royal Bank tellers that worked as a team to make that a reality.

Today after over a year and a half of living homeless, banking at times has been

an inevitable obstacle course on a number of occasions. One of those obstacles was when I lost a permanent debit card for withdrawing money from the bank's ATM machine that had me resorting to a temporary debit card because I had no permanent fixed address that a permanent card could be mailed to. So the two female bank employees, who went out of their way for me, were female employees intern client advisor Jocelyn Simbulan and client advisor Charlene Zacharias.

I first approached Jocelyn with the request for an extension on my temporary client debit card, which was due to expire in a few days. But this time something unexpectedly turned in my favor, when we both were interrupted by another employee, Charlene Zacharias, who suggested to Jocelyn that a permanent client debit card could be mailed out to this bank for me to conveniently pickup in five to 10 business days because I no longer had a fixed address to have one mailed to a residence. So thanks to that team of

concerned RBC employees, Client Advisor Charlene Zacharias and Intern Client Advisor Jocelyn Simbulan, I'll finally be receiving a personal permanent RBC client debit card that I won't have to renew every thirty days, which will save me a dozen trips a year.

I've been homeless for over a year and a half, while living in three Alberta cities that include Calgary, Red Deer and now Medicine Hat. I hope to soon return to Edmonton in finding a place where my banking will once again serve as a convenience without the unstable glitches that I've previously experienced while living in a homeless environment.

Thanks to the team efforts of RBC Client Advisor Charlene Zacharias and Intern Client Advisor Jocelyn Simbulan, a re-ordered permanent debit card will give me immediate access to withdrawing from an ATM machine, without the worry of further delays, when waiting to renew a temporary debit card!

# Finding your story in the Alberta Street News Archives

Back issues of both Our Voice and Alberta Street News have been archived at the University of Alberta.

For writers who wish to locate stories they have written in the past or for anyone wanting to reread stories, they can be located and downloaded.

The process for gathering stories takes a few steps.

1) Navigate to <https://archive.org/details/alberta-street-news>

2) On the left side of the screen you'll see a searchbox that says "Search this Collection."

Two buttons that say "Metadata" and "Text contents"

\*\*Make sure the button that says "Text contents" is highlighted by clicking it

Type in the name of the writer.

3) Hit the search icon, and a bunch of issues will show up below. When you click on each one, the places where the writer's name shows up in the issue are displayed on the left side of the screen.

You can tell pretty quickly which of the search results related to something the writer wrote, or just to a mention of them.

4) Find the story by clicking on the link or just by clicking through the pages of the magazine.

5) Highlight the text, copy and paste it into a word doc with whatever reference information you want.

If the person searching has Acrobat Reader DC, they can download the whole paper, and then open it in Acrobat so they can edit it that way, and probably get the pictures too?

As an alternative you can search through the hard copies of back issues that are archived at the University of Alberta.

Below: Edmonton Street News first anniversary photo 2004. The name changed to Alberta Street News in 2011.

