

LEGACY IN ACTION

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Good Eats

Get a taste of local
restaurants with the
YEG Eats series

BUILDING CAPACITY

Two residents lead the newly
established Edmonton's
Black Community Fund



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Cover photo by Tina Chang



Martin Garber-Conrad

Martin Garber-Conrad

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) established the Anti-Racism Fund (ARF) in the summer of 2020. We came to see that more needed to be done to support Edmonton's BIPOC-led and -serving organizations. The ARF was designed to flow money into those communities quickly and effectively. Since its creation, 27 projects have been funded, for a total of \$800,000.

Unlike most funds at ECF, the ARF is not endowed. This means that additional allocations from the community fund will be necessary to maintain this level of funding.

In our cover story, you'll learn about several passionate organizations who have come together in the spirit of the ARF to establish a new endowment fund to support Edmonton's Black communities in perpetuity. ECF has committed up to \$100,000 in matching funding for all donations made to Edmonton's Black Community Fund by December 31, 2021.

Collaboration is a powerful tool to make lasting, positive change in our city. On page 18, read about C5, a grassroots partnership between five social agencies who are sharing resources and knowledge to better serve the 6,000 Edmontonians who rely on their programs.

On page 8, we celebrate the 10th

anniversary of United Way's Empower U program. This initiative has been creating pathways to financial independence for more than 2,500 women living in poverty. It's a truly inspiring initiative and we look forward to its success over the *next* 10 years, too.

We are also excited to share on page 10 the story of a new film series ECF sponsored. With ECF support, Imagine Films produced *YEG Eats*, an eight-part video series profiling BIPOC-owned restaurants in Edmonton. The series delves into communities that surround these eateries and how the featured restaurants have weathered the pandemic.

And on page 6, take a walk in the woods with a pair of volunteer Conservation Land Stewards at the Smith Blackburn Homestead. Smith Blackburn is one of 14 conservation lands owned and managed by the Edmonton & Area Land Trust (EALT). Thanks to the hard work of its land stewards, EALT is providing the public with access to some of the most ecologically diverse and important lands our province has to offer. We encourage you to get out of town and go for a hike this fall.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Legacy in Action*.



ESTA BEE PHOTOGRAPHY

Esta Baker of Esta Bee Photography is an emerging Indigenous artist and photographer from Yellowknife, NWT and now calls the Edmonton area home. She is a candid photographer focused on the connection we have to this land, representing Indigenous culture and diversity.

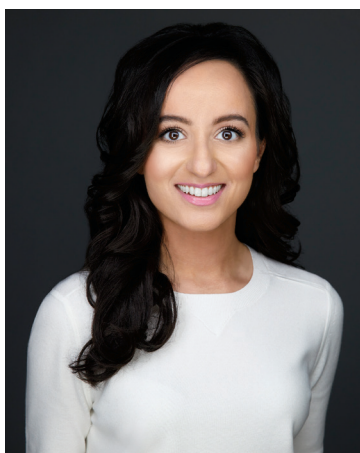
KEVIN TUONG

Kevin is a professional photographer in Edmonton, specializing in commercial photography. Recently, he's begun shooting landscape and cityscape photography to inspire the viewer. You can find him daydreaming about new image concepts and pursuing new photographic techniques and styles.



LISA CATTERALL

Lisa is an Edmonton-based freelance writer and editor. Over the past decade, her writing has appeared in magazines like *Edify*, *WHERE* and *The Tomato*. When she's not feverishly clacking away at a keyboard, she can be found enjoying many of our city's culinary gems.



JASLEEN MAHIL

Jasleen is a freelance writer and optometrist from Edmonton with a passion for telling stories about Edmontonians. In her spare time, Jasleen enjoys reading and exploring the outdoors with her dog, Luna.

TOM MURRAY

Tom is a freelance writer, barely competent gardener, and hoarder of DVDs. He lives in Western Canada with two dogs, a perennially angry cat, and a (thankfully) understanding wife.





NURTURING NATURE

**EDMONTON & AREA LAND TRUST
CREATES OPPORTUNITIES TO MAINTAIN
AND CONSERVE ECOSYSTEMS**

BY ANDREW PAUL

CARLIE LEWIS BRUSHES the dirt and woodchips off her hands as she smiles at her morning's work.

The newly planted pollinator garden overlooks a beaver pond on the Smith Blackburn Homestead. Every year, it will flower and feed many of the property's denizens. These include clouds of swallowtail butterflies, many species of bees and other animals and insects that play an integral role in maintaining the property's biodiversity.

"If you have a high biodiversity of plants, you're going to have that high biodiversity of pollinators," Lewis says. "A lot of us think of conservation in terms of our national and provincial parks, but it's important everywhere."

Though the Smith Blackburn Homestead is just a few kilometres east of Elk Island National Park, the property is not provincially or federally designated. Instead, it's

one of 14 conservation lands stewarded by the Edmonton & Area Land Trust (EALT). The EALT was established in 2007 through a partnership between Edmonton Community Foundation and five other organizations. Its mission is to conserve nature and engage people in land stewardship.

In 2018, the Smith Blackburn Homestead was donated to the EALT by a landowner who wishes to remain anonymous. To care for its properties, the EALT relies on its many volunteers, including a team of 75 Conservation Land Stewards.

As a steward, Lewis maintains trails, repairs fences, removes invasive weeds, restocks geocaches and reports vandalism. Volunteering for the EALT is a perfect fit for the 29-year-old who earned her BSc and certificate in land reclamation in biology from the University of Alberta. She credits her passion for nature to her mom.

"She was a forester in her early career," Lewis says. "I spent my youth in the bush with her, bombing around in a truck and up in helicopters, mapping pinecones and getting my boots stuck in the mud. I've always had an intuitive connection with nature."

The EALT's Conservation Land Stewards are a diverse mix of people who are connected through their love of nature.

Adrian Joosten is in his mid-60s and has been volunteering with the EALT in various capacities for years. Most recently, Joosten and his wife became stewards of the EALT's Glory Hills site.

Glory Hills is a 110-acre property situated in the transition zone between the Boreal Forest and Aspen Parkland Natural Regions near



“I’VE ALWAYS
HAD AN
INTUITIVE
CONNECTION
WITH
NATURE.”

– CARLIE LEWIS

Stony Plain. Joosten has implemented many of the conservation principles of the EALT on his acreage at home.

“A couple of years ago, my mature spruce trees went to seed, and we’ve now got an abundance of small spruce trees growing around the property,” Joosten explains. “I’ve been collecting them and putting them into nursery beds, helping them to grow and then looking to transplant them back into other areas on the property.”

The EALT’s Conservation Stewards are volunteers, but, in place of cash, they’re paid in what Joosten feels is a more valuable currency.

“I’ve been reading up on all the health

benefits, the forest baths, the sun exposure. These are so important for our well-being,” he says. “As a great de-stressor, taking a walk in the woods is wonderful.”

This is an important part of the EALT’s mission. Not only is it conserving natural ecosystems, it’s working to connect the public to the natural beauty of these lands. Of the EALT’s 14 properties, 11 are open to the public. Every day, it is working to enrich visitors’ experiences now and for the future.

“We see a need for the preservation of a land,” Joosten says. “It has to be held as pristine as it can, not only for our enjoyment, but for the enjoyment of generations to come.” ■

BREAKING THE CYCLE

EMPOWER U OFFERS FINANCIAL LITERACY COURSES, AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

BY JASLEEN MAHIL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
ESTA BEE PHOTOGRAPHY

ONE IN 10 PEOPLE in Edmonton lives in poverty. Fifty-three per cent of those living in poverty are women and 43 per cent are visible minorities.

In 2015, End Poverty Edmonton created a strategy plan that outlines 28 priorities to end poverty. One specific priority is to “expand the spectrum of financial empowerment initiatives.” And, for the past 10 years, United Way’s Empower U program has been doing just that.

Empower U started in 2012 when it joined forces with seven organizations offering financial literacy programs to women impacted by domestic violence, sexual exploitation or poverty. By joining under one initiative, they were able to save money and resources.

Today, Empower U offers financial literacy, financial coaching and a matched savings program to individuals, primarily women, living in poverty. Ten community social agencies deliver the program with trained facilitators covering topics such as debt management, budgeting, investments and relationships with money. The matched savings component offers participants the opportunity to save a maximum of \$250 which is matched at a 1:1 ratio by the Empower U program. Participants can then use this money to create an emergency savings fund or invest into an RESP, RRSP or TFSA.

From 2012 to 2020, there were 2,560 enrolments with 1,776 participants completing 10 to 14 sessions.



Karina Hurtado is the program manager of Empower U and has been with the organization for the past 10 years. Hurtado sees the importance of focusing on women who are experiencing poverty.

“When we are talking about breaking the cycle of poverty,” she says, “we are supporting women to get the information, tools and resources to share that with their families, kids, parents and friends – so I think it is a very impactful way to break that generational cycle.”

While the program teaches financial literacy, many participants experience a deeper emotional and healing process. A recent self-study of the program found participants felt Empower U was a journey of self-discovery that helped not only with their finances, but also their overall confidence. Hurtado shares that she sees participants “move from being scared or experiencing financial stress

to being confident. Not just with their finances, but with themselves.”

Laura Mushumanski took the Empower U program in 2018 at the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW). She says that before starting the program, she felt shame around her relationship with money. The supportive environment at IAAW immediately made her feel safe and connected to the other participants.

“When I went to IAAW, I was offered that unconditional confidence, that respect, and that these women who were there just really understood and got it and we didn’t feel ashamed from where we came,” Mushumanski shares. “It just made everything so much more humbling and so much easier to be able to learn from each other and just let our guard down. It was very beautiful.”

Not only did she get a better understanding about her finances from the program, she gained confidence in herself that applied to all areas of



her life. “I needed something, that alternative perspective, something that made me feel like I was believing in myself again. It gave me that awareness, that enlightenment feeling,” she says.

From this positive experience, Mushumanski tries to create a safe environment for others in her life. “It is that domino effect, it just takes one person out of 25 to plant that seed and get everything going,” she explains.

“IT JUST TAKES ONE PERSON OUT OF 25 TO PLANT THAT SEED AND GET EVERYTHING GOING.”

– LAURA MUSHUMANSKI



Photos: Laura Mushumanski was photographed while exploring Edmonton Convention Centre’s Community Medicine Wheel Garden

Currently, she is completing her final year of her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Alberta (with a major in psychology and a minor in Native studies). Once completed she will be going on to a Masters in counselling psychology. She also has a passion for writing – she is currently a contributor at *Alberta Native News* and is writing her first book.

While her professional hope is to one day be a modern medicine woman, her overarching goal in life is “to be the kindest and most compassionate, loving person that I can be,” she says. “A lot of people always have goals for success and things like that but I think that is what success is in my opinion.”

Hurtado says the goal for Empower U is to continue building financial stability and independence for the participants of the program. A financial coaching component, which allows participants to access one-on-one financial planning sessions at no cost, was added two years ago.

In addition to the 10 delivery partners, Empower U has six supporting partners and nine funding partners. Financial partners include ATB and Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF). Over the past 10 years, ECF has contributed \$525,000 to Empower U.

One thing that we can all do to help, Mushumanski says, is show compassion and understanding. “Poverty isn’t something that we choose. It does not have anything to do with our identity. If you see people on the street, smile, show them some dignity,” she says. ■



FINDING THE **Passion**

**YEG EATS VIDEO SERIES PUTS
THE SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL
BIPOC-OWNED RESTAURANTS**

BY TOM MURRAY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN TUONG



Photos: Left, Mikhail Prime, proprietor and chef of GreenHouse Health Food Eatery; Right, the Imagen Films crew on location at GreenHouse Health Food Eatery

a

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, a friend brought budding filmmaker Tomi Okunnuga to Monamie Resto, a northeast Edmonton restaurant.

“I had been in Edmonton for quite a few years and had never heard of this place,” chuckles Okunnuga, who immigrated to the city from Lagos, Nigeria in 2008. “There was Nigerian food, Caribbean, Ghanaian food; it opened my eyes as to what I could find here.”

It also prodded Okunnuga into thinking about the number of Edmonton eateries that go unnoticed next to the chain restaurants that end up being automatic destinations for many diners. While the city is known as a launching pad for such successful endeavours as Boston Pizza and Earls, smaller BIPOC restaurateurs often end up struggling to make ends meet. There have been a number of closures over the last couple of years, including Veggie Garden and Doan’s, both well-regarded Vietnamese restaurants. Like other businesses, BIPOC-owned restaurants have also struggled with the pandemic.

With that thought in mind, Okunnuga decided to film a series called YEG Eats, bringing attention to a number of the places to which he had been introduced. First, however, he and his company, Imagene Films, needed to find some funding.

“We actually didn’t qualify for anything that was available,” chuckles Okunnuga, who has been taking online film classes for some years now. “Most of the grants were for non-profits. Still, I decided to try with the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF). They got back to us and said that we didn’t qualify for any of their usual grants, but maybe they could work something out.”

It turned out that ECF was able to come up with \$8,000 for the project, enough for Okunnuga to bring in a bare-bones crew to



work with him. Changing health regulations meant that they had to adjust their initial filming schedule from August 2020 to the beginning of 2021. Eight restaurants were selected: GreenHouse Health Food Eatery, Monamie Resto, Yellowhead Donair and Pizza, Kultures Afro-Continental Restaurant, Mesobena, Zuhur Restaurant, Safron’s Caribbean Delight and Tantalizers African Express.

Once regulations loosened in early 2021, Okunnuga and his crew shot interviews and behind-the-scenes footage, all the while adhering to COVID-19 guidelines. For many of the restaurants, it was the first time they were highlighted outside of their community. Mikhail Prime, proprietor and chef of GreenHouse Health Food Eatery,



saw his interview as a way to correct certain presumptions about Black-owned restaurants.

“Sometimes people will come in and they’re surprised to find that the establishment is Black-run,” he explains. “Maybe because it’s so well-run, I don’t know. There’s a tendency with some people to assume that they’re a little bit more disorganized. Ethnic restaurants are where you find passion, and where you find people caring about every single thing they do.”

This was something that Okunnuga discovered during his time filming: Finding the pride of the restaurant owners reflected back at them by their loyal customers. While setting up in the morning for an interview with the proprietors of Safron’s Caribbean Delight, a customer came in requesting a favourite meal. Informed that the restaurant wasn’t open, he turned around and went back to his car, waiting for three hours before he could order.

“When the restaurant opened, he came right back in, talking about how badly he wanted his food,” Okunnuga marvels. “He was

willing to wait as long as it took.”

It was a story that Okunnuga found over and over again, and one that indicates hope for all of us in the long-term. Whenever the filmmaker gently prodded for instances of racism, the owners invariably offered something else — people of different ethnicities eating together in peace.

“They would tell me that there’s an openness about trying other people’s food and finding out about other cultures,” he says. “We will keep eating your food because it’s delicious.”

Moving efficiently, Okunnuga was able to film the segments in a matter of months, at the same time bonding with his subjects as entrepreneurs of colour, the filmmaker’s quest in some ways mirroring his subjects. While Okunnuga is quick to point out that his videos will mostly show the positive aspects of being in the restaurant business, race invariably becomes part of the equation.

“You have to be twice as good,” Prime reflects. “The film business is about who you know and getting involved with the right people, and some of the opportunities that may come down to people of Caucasian descent may not come your way. So we help each other out. Not only are they helping me out by creating media for me, I’m trying to help them out with some of my contacts.”

As of this writing, the filming is over and the team is moving into the final stages of editing. After the initial series is finished, the plan is to develop the concept further. It’s a calling-card for Okunnuga and Imagen Films, but it’s also his baby. In the meantime, he’s making use of his deep knowledge of restaurants in Edmonton.

“Yesterday I drove 30 minutes out of my way to get something from Safron’s Caribbean Delight,” he chuckles. “I live in the west end and they’re just off downtown. But like the guy who was waiting in his car, I’ll go anywhere for good food.” ■

"ETHNIC RESTAURANTS ARE WHERE YOU FIND PASSION, AND WHERE YOU FIND PEOPLE CARING ABOUT EVERY SINGLE THING THEY DO."

— MIKHAIL PRIME



BUILDING CAPACITY

IN EDMONTON'S BLACK COMMUNITY

A NEW ENDOWMENT FUND WILL PROVIDE A **SPARK** TO HELP ORGANIZATIONS SHOWCASE BLACK CULTURE

BY **AVRY LEWIS-MCDOUGALL**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TINA CHANG**

Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) is launching a new endowment fund known as Edmonton's Black Community Fund (EBCF).

The fund, which is being led by Nneka Otogbolu, Director of Communications and Equity Strategy at ECF, and Greg Davis, publisher of *Melanistic* magazine, will support Black-led and -serving organizations in Edmonton.

The fund will continue to grow and ECF will match donations made this year, with up to \$100,000 being contributed by the Foundation.

The endowment was sparked by an exploratory conversation between Otogbolu and Davis. Otogbolu had recently moved to Edmonton from Vancouver Island and was eager to become involved in her community.

It's still in the early stages, but the fund has already received a donation from Sickle Cell Alberta as well as a private donation of \$5,000, among others. There are also plans to have discussions with other Black-led organizations that are interested in helping the fund. To Davis, having local backing from multiple organizations shows that Edmonton's Black organizations and groups want to step up even more to help their community. >



Nneka Odogbolu

**"THE BLACK
COMMUNITY IN
EDMONTON IS
MOST DEFINITELY
A FORCE TO BE
RECKONED WITH
IN CANADA."**

- GREG DAVIS



“It just shows that the Black community in Edmonton has been starving for an opportunity to create some more self-sufficient programs for the community itself,” says Davis. “It kind of shows that there’s a lot of people out there that are willing to get behind programs that have some kind of a long-term, sustainable model that they can be happy to say they’re a part of launching and contributing to — and making sure that it does the work it’s supposed to do in Edmonton.”

“I know, I mean I moved to Edmonton six years ago from Toronto so I know what that’s about. I mean, Toronto’s the centre of the world, right? I saw in Alberta, a lot of times, it underestimated what the community there can do. I think that the Black community in Edmonton is most definitely a force to be reckoned with in Canada.”

A great example of Edmonton stepping up on the national stage came in early 2021 at the Say It Loud Canada competition, one of the largest youth summits in Canada. The competition showcases achievement in fashion design, entrepreneurship, social impact and innovation, technology, culinary art, visual art, performing art and literary art.

“Edmonton took home four of the top eight prizes nationally, and that was a Black youth competition,” says Davis.

To Otogbolu, the fund is a way to unite a Black community, no matter the country or region of origin.

“For me, it’s a great way to get Edmonton’s Black community together. In our community, there’s so much diversity and having a Black community fund is a way to get the Black community together to be a part of the solution or to be a part of solving the problem the Black community faces in Edmonton,” she said.

“We will not limit the fund to a particular sector, like education or arts and heritage. But we will definitely be more focused on capacity-building. So, if we have organizations, regardless of the sectors they serve, the EBCF would be an option for supporting.”

When it comes to supporting anti-racism initiatives, the fund and its founders will work with projects and organizations that want to change the perception of its Black citizens.

“We will also focus on Black-led and -serving organizations that run projects focused on challenging Black stereotypes through the arts, education and community engagement, thereby showcasing Black culture to help educate and

“EVEN IN THE NEXT 100 YEARS, THE FUNDS WILL BE GROWING AND DOLLARS WILL BE OUT THERE IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY DOING WORK FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY.”

– NNEKA OTOGBOLU

build relationships with Edmonton’s diverse communities,” says Otogbolu.

When the fund soft-launches, there will be Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn to get the word out, but also partnerships with organizations beyond the Black-led spaces.

“We intend to also leverage an allyship with organizations in the community that are not necessarily Black but will also want to be a part of solving problems that deal with racial equity in Edmonton,” says Otogbolu.

When it comes to the future of the fund, the goal for Otogbolu isn’t just to help for the next year or two; it will be able to help the community over many generations.

“The beauty of the endowment fund, why we decided to go through the route of the endowment fund, the way it’s structured, or the nickname I give it is ‘forever funds,’ because it grows,” Otogbolu said.

“The funds will actually outlive everyone that’s part of the founding members or founding advisory committee members. That’s what’s so cool about this, even in the next 100 years, the funds will be growing and dollars will be out there in the Black community doing work for the Black community.” ■

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

FIVE SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES BANDED TOGETHER TO PROVIDE VITAL SUPPORTS TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS

BY LISA CATTERALL

TUCKED AWAY IN A QUIET strip mall in northeast Edmonton, the C5 community hub is an unassuming locale. From the outside, it appears to be an ordinary office environment, with community members coming and going throughout the day. But what's going on inside is far from typical. Home to five social agencies, each serving a specific niche within the community, the centre is an innovative model of collaboration that's changing the way social services are developed and delivered to families in Edmonton.

"What really sets C5 apart is the way these five organizations can leverage resources and work together to eliminate barriers," says

Mohamad Elsaghir, director for the hub. "We're working to surround individuals with support and really respond to the needs they have, as they arise."

From a young age, Elsaghir began learning the ins and outs of the nonprofit world. While he was growing up, Elsaghir's mother worked at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, so he had a strong understanding of the individuals and communities who accessed its services. Now, as the director of C5, he guides a unique collaboration between the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Boyle Street Community Services, Norwood Child & Family Resource Centre and the Terra Centre for Teen Parents.

"The idea for C5 came about when the executive directors of these organizations came together a few years ago. There was an appetite for collaboration among them, and they were determined to find a better way to work together," he says. "So they formed this collaboration with the mandate of being responsive and supporting people quickly."

While each member organization of the



hub served a specific audience, the executive directors recognized a significant amount of overlapping need between each group. Working together would not only create financial efficiencies for each organization, but would also create a more supportive environment for those walking through the hub's front doors.

"What we find in C5 is that people are less traumatized or not having to re-traumatize themselves when they're looking to access services," Elsaghir says. "It's as relationship-based as possible — if we recognize that someone could benefit from another organization's work, they're given a warm referral to other people and services in the hub as needed."

When discussions about the hub began in 2015, each of the five founding executive directors involved was clear on the mandate and intention of this new space. Over the years, as staff have changed and new executive directors have stepped into their roles, they've continued on the same trajectory, keeping the emerging needs of the community in mind above all else. >

"WE'RE WORKING
TO SURROUND
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AND REALLY
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THEY HAVE,
AS THEY ARISE."

— MOHAMAD ELSAGHIR

"IT'S A VERY SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT IS ABLE TO MORPH INTO WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS."

— MEGHAN KLEIN

Meghan Klein, executive director of the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN), is one of the most recent additions to the C5 team. She was quickly brought into the fold after joining EMCN in the spring of 2020, and almost immediately realized that C5 was truly something special.

"C5 is a partnership unlike any other that I've been a part of," says Klein. "I've found it to be a group without agenda or ego. It's a very supportive environment that is able to morph into what the community wants."

One of the most significant benefits, Klein notes, is the speed at which C5 is able to mobilize. Guided by feedback from frontline workers in the hub, Klein and the other executive directors are able to make informed decisions about the services and supports needed in the community.

"Our frontline workers can very quickly see the needs that are arising in the community, and we can then very quickly respond," she says, noting that the C5 model encourages the leadership team to consider new ways to adapt and serve the community. "The default answer to any question or request is, 'Yes,' or 'Why not?' We're able to go beyond traditional limitations we may have had."

Since officially opening its doors in 2018, the C5 northeast hub has seen steady growth in the number of community members it serves. In its first year, approximately 1,500 Edmontonians accessed services through the northeast hub. By 2020, Elsaghir estimates, that number had grown to nearly 6,000.

While many of the centre's more traditional in-person services such as language lessons or youth group meetings were cancelled or altered during the coronavirus pandemic, new services were

also developed. In the early days of the pandemic, frontline workers recognized a need for community members to have computer access to attend school or work online, and put out a call for laptop donations. The hub also opened a new essentials market, offering fresh food and pantry items, baby supplies, smudge kits and other supplies available by delivery or pick-up.

"We're not a food-security organization, but we're able to work with other partners, like the Food Bank, to meet these kinds of needs as we see them coming up," says Elsaghir. "The C5 partnership is formally these five agencies working together, but really, we don't stop there. We just want to encourage that collaboration as much as we can."

Elsaghir, who has been with the hub since it opened, first as a manager and more recently as its director, is pleased with the hub's success to date, but sees great potential in where it's headed.

"The beauty in the community hub model is that it's community-led, community-run, and here to build and strengthen in the long term," he says. "I can't predict how this will look a few years down the road, because it's not up to me. But we will keep growing and supporting people in as many ways as we can." ■

Small Business & EMPLOYMENT in Edmonton

Small Business in Edmonton



In 2020, 94.4% of businesses in Edmonton were small businesses (having between 1 and 49 employees) of the total 32,102 businesses.

The top 4 business sectors in Edmonton in 2020:

Professional, scientific and technical services

Healthcare & social assistance

Construction

Retail Trade

Edmonton Vital Signs is an annual checkup conducted by Edmonton Community Foundation, in partnership with Edmonton Social Planning Council, to measure how the community is doing. Vital Topics are a quick but comprehensive look at issues that are timely and important to Edmonton.

Unless otherwise stated, "Edmonton" refers to Census Metropolitan Area and not solely the City of Edmonton.

NOTE TO READERS: Many of the income statistics are based on data collected prior to the pandemic.

Small Business in Alberta (2017):

- Employed about 36% of all Alberta private sector employment.
- Generated 28% of Alberta's GDP.
- Make up 96% of all businesses with employees.



In Edmonton the average base earnings is **\$42,000/year** for a Small Business Owner/Operator. Alberta's overall average wage (2019) was **\$61,766/year**.

Who is self-employed in Alberta?

In 2020, 351,300 individuals were self-employed in Alberta.

Of those self-employed individuals:

- 33.3% were women.
- 32.9% were 55 years or older.
- 15.1% were Indigenous people working off-reserve.
- 20.9% were landed immigrants (most have lived in Canada for 10+ years).

Top reasons for becoming self-employed in Alberta:

- 33.5% Independence, being one's own boss.
- 15.2% Nature of job had to be self-employed.
- 8.6% Work-family balance.

On average, self-employed people work 3 hours longer per week than employees but, self-employed women generally work 2.3 hours fewer than their employed counterparts.

Women are more likely to cite a work-family balance and to have flexible hours.

Who is starting a business in Canada?

- Recent immigrants are more likely than Canadian-born individuals.
- Those starting a business were younger and more often male.
- Fewer than 1% of those starting a business were individuals with a disability.
- Unemployed individuals were more likely to become business owners than were those with paid employment.
- A person starting a business is more likely to be married or have a common-law partner.



WOMEN-OWNED

Women are under-represented among business owners.

- **15.6% of Canadian Small & Medium Enterprises (SME) were majority-owned by women in 2017.**
 - 20.9% owned by men and women equally.

The income of women business owners was about 70% of that of men business owners.

FINANCING:

- more likely to be discouraged from borrowing.
- requests for debt financing is more likely to be approved.

IMMIGRANT-OWNED

Newcomers to Canada are more likely to start a business that grows quickly and creates more jobs per enterprise than are the Canadian-born population.

- The Business Development Bank of Canada says the entrepreneurial rate among newcomers is more than double the rate for people born in Canada.

INDIGENOUS-OWNED

According to a survey from Start Up Canada:

- **1.4% of SMEs are Indigenous-owned businesses.**
- Of this group
 - 64.3% owned by a man
 - 25.5% owned by a woman
 - 10.1% owned by men and women equally

According to a 2016 Indigenous business survey:

- The majority of Indigenous businesses were sole proprietors.
- About 14% of the businesses registered on a reserve were in Alberta.
- The largest sectors of business are in:
 - professional scientific and technical services (13%), or
 - construction (12%).

FINANCING:

- 65% rely on personal savings as a main source of financing their businesses.

Note: Very little data is available about businesses owned by persons with disabilities or owned by the LGBTQ2S+ populations in Edmonton.

OTHER WAYS TO make ends meet

Gig work

Gig economy refers to part-time or contract jobs that are needed to make ends meet.

Gig workers in Canada:

- made up 8.2% of all workers in Canada (2016).
- were more likely to be women.
- had a median income of only \$4,303/per year in 2016.
- **1 in 3 had a university degree. 13.7% men and 16.5% women held a master's degree or higher.**

Roughly one-half of those who had gig work in a given year had no gig income the next year. However, about one-quarter remained gig workers for three or more years.

- Gig work by industry:
 - Among women, the industry with the highest share of gig workers was public administration (20.1%).
 - Among men, the industry with the highest share of gig workers was arts, entertainment and recreation (15.6%).

- **Of the gig workers, 10.8% were immigrant men (in Canada fewer than 5 years), compared to 6.1% of Canadian-born men.**

The primary reasons someone does gig work:

- 53% Extra money/savings
- 29% Make ends meet
- 13% Difficulty finding work/no other options
- 11% It is the main source of income

Multiple-job holders

- More self-employed individuals held multiple jobs than did paid employees.
- **60% of multiple-job holders who were self-employed in their main job were also self-employed in their other job.**

Underground economy

The underground economy is economic activities, whether legal or illegal, that escape measurement.

- **In 2018 the value of underground economic activity in Alberta was \$6.2 billion.**
- Four industries accounted for more than half of underground economic activity:
 - residential construction (26.2%),
 - retail trade (12.3%),
 - finance, insurance, real estate, rental and holding companies (10.3%), and
 - accommodation and food services (9.1%).
- Wages and undeclared tips account for the largest share of unreported income.



Multi-level marketing

Multi-level marketing (MLM) is a strategy used to encourage existing distributors to recruit new distributors. They are paid a percentage of their recruits' sales. Distributors also make money through direct sales of products to customers.

- Studies have estimated that most MLMs don't make money as they require a purchase of product for demos and travelling for training and conferences.
- Multi-level marketing often target women, particularly stay-at-home parents.
- Many people in MLMs refer to themselves as small-business owners.



Social Enterprises

A social enterprise is a revenue-generating organization whose objective is to have a social impact.

'Social enterprise' is not defined within Canada's Income Tax Act. There is no certification or other program to enable a venture to be officially deemed a social enterprise.

Social good

Employment Social Enterprises (ESE) are businesses that create training and employment opportunities for people facing systemic barriers to entry into the mainstream labour market.

- **Social enterprises (in 2016) provided paid employment for at least 31,000 workers in Canada, who together earned more than \$442 million in wages and salaries.**
- Those employed included at least 23,000 people with disabilities and/or other employment barriers.

Employees of Social Enterprises

In addition to job skills, an ESE also tends to provide life skills, counselling, and access to other services provided by the organization.

In a survey of employees working in ESEs:

- **income increased by an average of \$456/month.**
- 62% say they are now able to meet basic needs.
- 14.7% fewer said they were worried about housing.
- **29% fewer reported the need to access free food (foodbank).**
- 14% more said they were in excellent or good health.
- Are more likely to report good sense of community belonging.
- **63% feel like they have a greater quality of life.**

BUSINESS during the COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- **Women employed in small firms represented 37.9% of the employment losses in Canada, while men accounted for 23.6%.**
- Of those employed in large firms accounted for 18.0% (women) and 11.3% (men) of the losses employment.

Business closures and survivals in Edmonton during COVID

- 36.6% more insolvencies in in Edmonton than 2019. Of those:
 - **20.4% more businesses went bankrupt.**
 - 72.7% more businesses made an offer to pay a percentage of what they owe to creditors.



BUSINESS IN EDMONTON:	FEB. 2020	FEB. 2021
ACTIVE:	36,983	36,627
OPENED:	1,825	2,104
CLOSED:	1,878	2,072

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