

LEGACY IN ACTION

SUMMER
2021

DANCE DANCE DANCE

MATTHEW WOOD'S
FRESH APPROACH
BRINGS IT ALL
TOGETHER

THE FUTURE OF HISTORY

Fort Edmonton Park
relaunches with
new experiences



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Martin Garber-Conrad
Martin Garber-Conrad

A MESSAGE FROM THE **CEO**

JUNE IS USUALLY a month for celebration, as many of us plan around Edmonton's eclectic festival season. We would see the Freewill Players present world-class Shakespeare in Hawrelak Park. It's Pride Month with its attendant festivities. And, we might already be looking forward to Heritage Festival, the Edmonton International Fringe Festival or Folk Fest.

But not this year. As we enter the second summer of the pandemic, we know our arts sector continues to struggle. We will not be able to enjoy many of our festival staples in the way that we were used to.

Despite the challenges, Edmonton artists haven't been languishing. This issue's cover story profiles Matthew Wood — a recipient of the Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund (EATF). Wood is a Cree dancer and music producer who uses his talents to work with youth in the community. The EATF provides funding for him to continue this work along with 19 other recipients across several artistic disciplines. The EATF was established by the Edmonton Arts Council and Edmonton Community Foundation in 1997. Today, we see just how valuable this support is.

June is also National Indigenous History Month in Canada. This year, we congratulate the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards on celebrating its 20th anniversary. Since the BBMAs were established in partnership with ECF, more than 2,000 awards have been provided to 1,400 Métis

students in Alberta. On page 6, you can read about the history of the BBMAs and how Syncrude has stepped up to provide \$200,000 to the program. This support will continue helping Métis students achieve their post-secondary goals.

Education has always been important to ECF donors. On page 8, we examine two funds that honour Edmonton educators. Judy Craig's fund supports professional development and classroom resources to help children with learning disabilities, while Fran Papworth's fund was established to support arts, cultural and educational programs for youth in need.

Looking ahead, we know it's only a matter of time before the pandemic eases and we can again have a normal summer, which could include a visit to Fort Edmonton Park. On page 11, we look at the newly renovated attractions that will be waiting for visitors, including the revamped midway and brand-new Indigenous Pavilion.

In the meantime, we are blessed to have one of the most beautiful urban river valleys in the world. On page 22, you'll read about two projects headed by the River Valley Alliance to help connect 100 km of trails between Fort Saskatchewan and Devon. On June 9th at 11 a.m., we invite you to hear more about the RVA's vision as they present the keynote address at our 2021 Annual Meeting. The event will be virtual again this year — visit our website for more details.

We hope you enjoy this issue.



DANIELLE PARADIS

Danielle is a Métis writer and editor. She is a contributing editor at *Canadaland* and co-writes a newsletter, *Rage Against the Municipal*, which focuses on local politics. She also loves embroidery and French Bulldogs.



DAVID BERRY

David is a writer from Edmonton whose work has appeared across Canada. His first book, *On Nostalgia*, was published by Coach House Books in July 2020.



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.



LIAM MACKENZIE

Liam is an Edmonton-based editorial and portrait photographer. Liam focuses on documenting identities and stories using colour, movement and illustrations. His previous clients include The Sports Network, Community Based Research Centre and Edify.



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.



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF MÉTIS EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

THE BELCOURT BROUSSEAU MÉTIS AWARDS CREATE A STEPPING STONE FOR A LIFETIME OF SUCCESS

TWENTY YEARS AGO, Herb Belcourt, Orval Belcourt and Georges Brosseau knew they had found the right community partner to make a lasting difference for Métis students in Alberta.

In 2001, they established an endowment with Edmonton Community Foundation to create the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards (BBMA). The initial endowment was \$13 million. Today the fund has grown to \$20.5 million and supports Alberta Métis students pursuing post-secondary education.

A key part of this growth has been continued individual and corporate contributions, including donations from Alberta Health Services, Scotiabank, TELUS, Métis Family Services, Syncrude and many others.

In 2010, Syncrude donated to the endowment fund to support students from the Wood Buffalo Region. This year, in celebration

of the BBMA's 20th anniversary, Syncrude is donating an additional \$200,000.

"It's a program that we're really proud to be associated with," says Will Gibson, Syncrude spokesperson. "We really think that it's worthwhile, given our focus on working with Indigenous and Métis communities and focusing on trying to hire Indigenous and Métis people."

This support from the community has allowed the BBMA's impact to grow. In 2002, 32 students received a BBMA, and in 2020, the number had grown more than five times to 161 recipients. The BBMA Panel hopes to eventually provide full scholarships to all eligible applicants.

There is much to celebrate as the BBMA's mark their 20th anniversary. In two decades, more than \$9 million has been provided through over 2,000 awards to more than 1,400 Métis Albertans

"WE REALLY THINK THAT IT'S WORTHWHILE, GIVEN OUR FOCUS ON WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS AND MÉTIS COMMUNITIES AND FOCUSING ON TRYING TO HIRE INDIGENOUS AND MÉTIS PEOPLE."

— WILL GIBSON





**“KNOWLEDGE IS A
FIRE OF EDUCATION.
WE WOULD LIKE ALL
MEMBERS OF THE MÉTIS
FAMILY TO BE ABLE TO
LIGHT THEIR CANDLES
AGAINST THAT FIRE,
SO ALL CAN HAVE A
BRIGHTER FUTURE.”**

– GEORGES BROUSSEAU

studying at post-secondary institutions. In 2021, more than 400 students applied for funding.

The BBMAs are now one of the largest sources of non-governmental funding for Métis students in Canada. Orval and Georges are still involved, as was Herb, until his death in 2017.

Orval and Georges sit on the BBMA Panel, where they guide the program and review award applications. Applicants are evaluated on numerous criteria, including likelihood of improved opportunities through education, financial need, connection to their Métis community and personal circumstances.

“When we created the BBMAs, we had an endless date in mind,” explains Orval. “Today, our principal investment is over \$20 million and our student awards average is increasing. In this new age of virtual and technical communication, education is vital and I am so pleased to see our Métis people placing a higher priority on learning.”

The founders are also part of the annual BBMA Sash Ceremony. At the ceremony, students receive their sash from Métis Elders. As they are welcomed into the BBMA family, they are also connected to sponsors, their Métis community and fellow students. This demonstrates that the community is there to support them on their educational journey. Due to COVID-19, a virtual event will be held on September 18, 2021.

Over the past 20 years, the awards have had a significant impact on the Métis community in Alberta. The BBMAs have set up students for success in their careers and in their lives. Recipients are advancing in their careers, becoming key decision-makers and giving back to their communities.

“Knowledge is a fire of education,” Georges Brosseau says. “We would like all members of the Métis family to be able to light their candles against that fire, so all can have a brighter future.” ■

SUPPORT THE BBMAS: bbma.ca



BBMA founders (from left) →
Herb Belcourt, Orval Belcourt
and Georges Brosseau

IMAGE SUPPLIED

BY LISA CATTERALL

PHOTOS BY
LIAM MACKENZIE

EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION

AFTER DECADES SPENT
SUPPORTING YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT, TWO WOMEN
HAVE CREATED LEGACIES
THAT WILL HELP LOCAL
YOUTH REACH THEIR FULL
POTENTIAL FOR YEARS
TO COME.



← Fran Papworth and Judy Craig, photographed at the historic McKay Avenue School in downtown Edmonton

FRAN PAPWORTH

IF THERE IS ONE WORD to describe the legacy that Fran Papworth has created in the community, it would be “joy.” Throughout her life, she has generously given her time to local causes, particularly those that open doors for children in Edmonton. Whether collecting school supplies for kids in need, volunteering with 630 CHED Santas Anonymous or developing a pen-pal program that paired local students with employees at TELUS, Papworth has touched thousands of lives through her volunteer work.

“I’ve always volunteered. It’s one of those things that when you start, you can’t stop,” she says. “But I guess you could say I got a little more gung-ho with it when I retired.”

These days, when she’s not helping organize volunteer opportunities for other retirees, she still manages to find time to attend online school with one of her granddaughters three days a week. But Papworth’s passion for children’s education extends well outside of the Grade 2 classes she’s been attending as of late.

“I’d say about 80 per cent of my volunteering involves kids,” she says. “Early education is so important, and I think sometimes we lose sight of that.”

So when Papworth’s friend and former neighbour, Larry Anderson, suggested creating an Endowment Fund with Edmonton Community Foundation in her name, she naturally chose to support youth education programs.

“I had been to a fundraiser breakfast for the Edmonton Public School Foundation, and was so impressed by the work they’d been doing to open full-day kindergarten in schools across the city,” she says. “So we sat down with the Foundation and looked at ways to support their work.”



“THE MONEY THAT’S GOING THROUGH THIS FUND IS SO WORTHY AND SO NEEDED TO GIVE THESE KIDS THE CHANCE TO LEARN AND HAVE A BRIGHT FUTURE.”

– FRAN PAPWORTH

In 2010, the Fran Papworth Opportunity for Joy Endowment Fund was established with the goal of funding arts, cultural and education programs for youth in need. In the years since, it has been used to support a variety of educational initiatives and opportunities that kids might not otherwise be able to access.

“The money that’s going through this fund is so worthy and so needed to give these kids the chance to learn and have a bright future,” she says. “There are children whose parents are learning English, or who are working more than one job, who don’t have resources to do these kinds of activities. For them, this funding is needed now more than ever.” >



“THESE KIDS LEARN DIFFERENTLY, BUT THAT DOESN’T MEAN THEY CAN’T LEARN. DIFFERENT KIDS MAY REQUIRE DIFFERENT APPROACHES.”

– JUDY CRAIG

JUDY CRAIG

ALTHOUGH SHE’S LONG SINCE left the classroom behind, Judy Craig remains as committed to children’s education as ever. After a decades-long career specializing in diagnostic reading and supporting children with learning disabilities, Craig has settled into retirement but remains well connected to local school boards.

Craig’s story began decades earlier, in a Grade 5 classroom in Chicago, Illinois. As a novice teacher with a bustling class of 37 students, she had her hands full. That didn’t stop her from focusing extra energy on one student in particular: a young boy named Billy, who struggled to read the most basic words but seemed to do well in conversation and other kinds of classroom work.

“As a teacher, I thought, ‘I’m going to fix this.’ As my class was working on things, I’d take him to the back of the room and try to work with him. To my surprise and regret, although I did try, when you have 36 other children you just don’t have enough time to work one-on-one to the degree they need,” she says. “It was that experience with that boy that set the course for the rest of my career. If I couldn’t teach that boy to read, I felt I had no business being a teacher.”

Years later, as a result of her experience with Billy, Craig returned to school to complete a Masters degree in Diagnostic Reading at the University of Alberta.

“These kids learn differently, but that doesn’t mean they can’t learn,” she says. “Different kids may require different approaches. You just have to figure out how their brains work and give them tools and strategies that work for them.”

She became involved with the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta, a parent organization that fights for better programming to support children with deficits in reading, writing, math or other studies. Eventually, Craig stepped into the role of principal at the Academy at King Edward, a school offering specialized programming to meet the needs of students like Billy. It was through this work that she came to meet Larry Anderson.

“Larry understood I was really interested in kids who were struggling and learned differently. One day he said to me, ‘I want to recognize teachers who are doing exceptional work for children with learning disabilities,’” she says.

Thus, Larry established the Judy Craig Professional Development Award at Edmonton Community Foundation. The award offers teachers in Edmonton-area school districts (including Edmonton, St. Albert and Elk Island) funding to support professional development or classroom resources to support children with learning disabilities. As classrooms have evolved in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, so have the needs for these kinds of supports.

“Unfortunately, with the onset of the pandemic last year, we weren’t able to select a recipient as we normally would have,” says Craig. “But these children still need support, and I know teachers are still doing their best to provide it, so I hope we can get back to it.” ■

A NEW LOOK INTO **THE PAST**

**FORT EDMONTON RELAUNCH
BEGINS SUMMER 2021 >**

BY DANIELLE PARADIS



IMAGES SUPPLIED

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ort Edmonton Park has been closed for almost three long years and many Edmontonians are eagerly anticipating the re-opening. The Fort Edmonton Park Enhancement project is a \$165-million investment from all three levels of government, and the Fort Edmonton Foundation. With all the refurbishments and enhancements complete, the new Fort Edmonton experience boasts a new front-entry plaza where visitors can get gifts and coffee, a stunning new Indigenous Peoples' experience called the Indigenous Pavilion that explores the rich history of Canada's first people, and a beautiful new 1920s-style midway expansion.

In addition to the funding provided, Fort Edmonton Foundation has a number of endowment funds with Edmonton Community Foundation, which will support ongoing operations at the Park in perpetuity.



“WHEN THEY ASKED ABOUT VOLUNTEERS, I MADE THE MISTAKE OF PUTTING UP MY HAND AND SAYING I WOULD CARVE ONE HORSE. IT HAS NOW BEEN 20 YEARS.”

– DOUG WARREN

Ask any Edmontonian who has lived in the city for a while, and they will have a deep connection to this cultural gem. Fort Edmonton is 160 acres of gorgeous land in the heart of the river valley. It is a beautiful location for a stroll through history. Many people, including Fort Edmonton Foundation Board member Alle DeMelo, remember going to the park with their families as children. DeMelo fondly recalls the visits with her grandfather. “My grandfather took me to the Fort, so I have a lot of deep sentiments about that. It taught me a lot about culture and belonging,” she says.

I loved going to Fort Edmonton as a kid, too, and worked a summer at Hotel Selkirk, the 1920s-themed hotel on-site. Historical-interpreter jobs (the actors you find in costume wandering around the park) and work at the hotel are arguably the best summer jobs in the province. You get to wear costumes and talk about history with whomever roams by. The hotel has also undergone an expansion, with the addition of family-friendly rooms and event space.

Renée Williams, Senior Vice President of Customer Experience and Product Development for the Fort Edmonton Management Company, says they are extremely thrilled to be opening Fort Edmonton up again and are “so excited for people to be able to come back down and experience the fun and memorable moments in time.”

“We’re very excited to visit the new attractions at Fort Edmonton Park this summer,” Nneka Odogbolu, Director of Communications and Equity Strategy at Edmonton Community Foundation, says. “Our ongoing relationship with Fort Edmonton Foundation will help ensure that visitors from near and far are able to learn about the history of our city for generations to come.”

And one very memorable moment is sure to be the expanded midway.

The Johnny J. Jones Midway is named after an American carnival showman who founded his eponymous exhibition, which ran from 1919 to 1930. A July 15, 1924 edition of the *Edmonton Journal* declared that, “the exhibition opened under the brightest auspices” and celebrated the new additions to the midway from previous years. Now, in 2021, visitors to the newly opened park get to experience that excitement all over again. Volunteers spent countless hours researching midway rides and working with local organizations, including ATCO, to re-create the hand-cranked masterpieces from the 1920s.

But the must-see attraction of the carnival is the hand-carved horse carousel. All the horses have different designs and different histories. “Some of them are actually named after some of the key volunteers that got the project going,” says DeMelo. “The Foundation wanted to have this carousel built but they couldn’t afford to have a master craft everything.” So, DeMelo says, they found Bob Cherot, owner of the Montana Carousel Company,



and some committee members travelled to spend time with him in Montana learning how to hand-carve these horses.

On average, each horse took 500 hours to carve and painting them could take up to 200 hours. This labour of love started in the early 2000s. Doug Warren, a volunteer who has been at the park for 25 years, was one of the people who worked on carving the carousel horses.

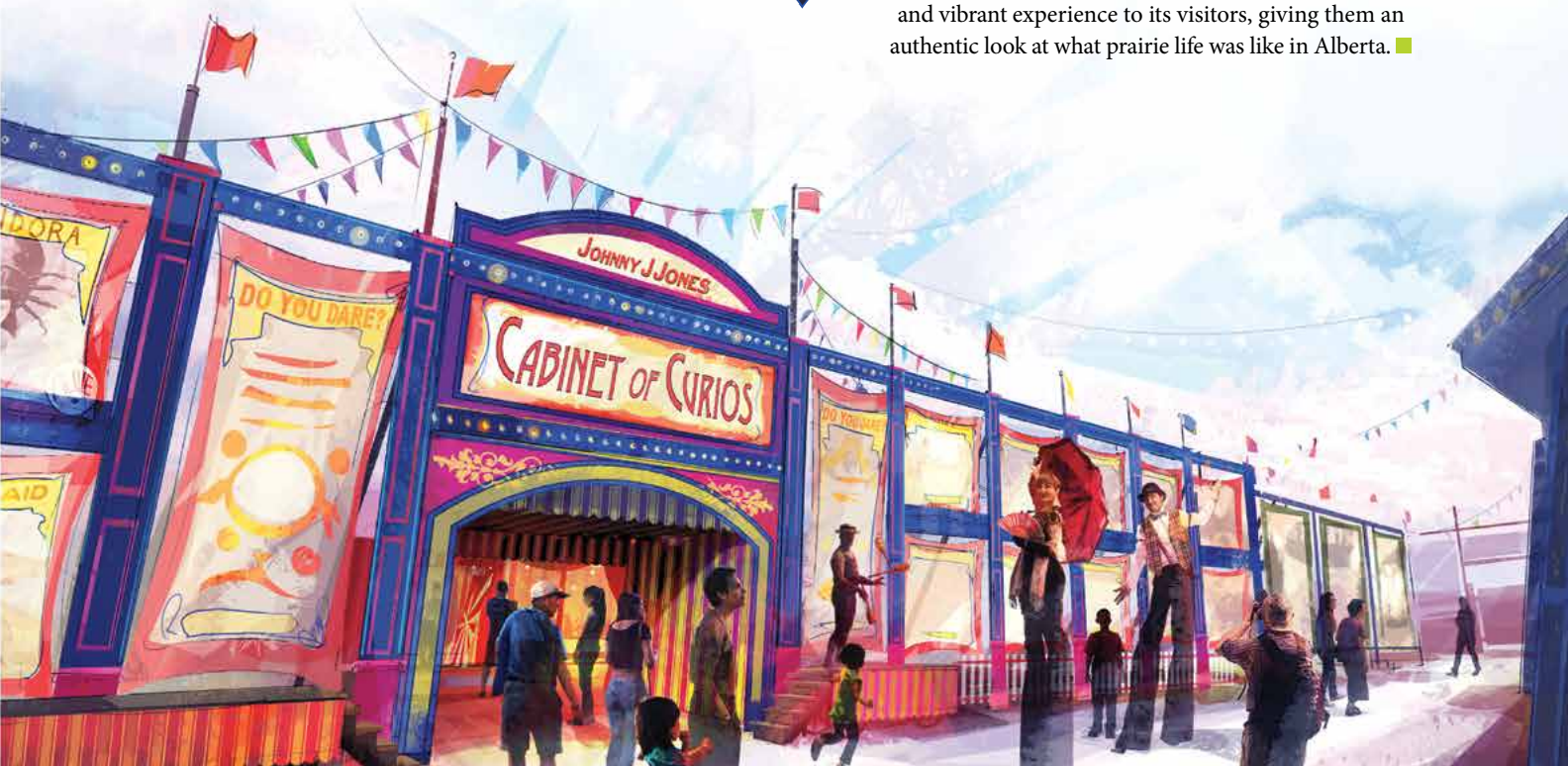
“I’ve been a bird carver, a whittler for many years, so when they asked about volunteers, I made the mistake of putting up my hand and saying I would carve one horse,” jokes Warren. “It has now been 20 years,” he added.

The re-opening isn’t just midway games and cafes, though; the refurbishment opens the book on new chapters of Edmonton history. Janet Tryhuba, Executive Director of Fort Edmonton Foundation, says the new Indigenous pavilion is expansive at 29,000 square feet. “The indoor space takes people through the arrival, through pre-contact [with settlers], post-contact and the Métis story,” says Tryhuba.

**“COMING INTO
A HERITAGE
SPACE WHERE
RECONCILIATION
HAS STARTED TO
TAKE HOLD HAS
BEEN WONDERFUL
TO SEE.”**
— ALLE DEMELO

“Coming into a heritage space where reconciliation has started to take hold has been wonderful to see. Just in terms of the fact that Indigenous culture is part of Canadian culture and we can’t ignore it,” says DeMelo about the decision to expand the story of Canada’s First Nations and Métis cultures. “We can’t suppress it. Making it part of our major sites and common dialogue will help kids grow up with an understanding of Indigenous culture and language. That is critical in breaking the cycle of racism and systemic poverty.”

The renovation has been many years in the making and continued on through the COVID-19 pandemic. When Fort Edmonton opens again, it will provide a refreshed and vibrant experience to its visitors, giving them an authentic look at what prairie life was like in Alberta. ■





CHANGING CONVENTION

TWENTY YEARS AFTER HIS FIRST FORAY INTO EDMONTON'S MUSIC AND DANCE SCENES, MATTHEW WOOD CONTINUES TO INSPIRE COLLABORATION — AND COMMUNITY

BY **DAVID BERRY**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DANIEL WOOD



Matthew Wood is a community centre. Ideas, people, art forms, cultures, subcultures, histories and futures: He is both a focal point and a staging ground for all of them.

He opens his doors to the world that surrounds him, to every part of it, and transforms it into something that is both rooted and unimagined, a part of the whole that is pulling it somewhere new.

Wood is not easy to define, if only because definition by nature involves boundaries and restrictions. He performs under the name Creeasian, which nods both to his heritage — his father was Vietnamese and his mother Cree — and to his endlessly original approach to the mediums in which he's most at home: dance and DJing. But it doesn't quite capture the breadth and depth of his inspiration. Perhaps the most encompassing way to say it, is that he's an artist. Still, if the purpose of an artist is to absorb the world and reflect back an entirely original perspective, he has made community-organizing as central to his practice as anything else.

"He rolled all the time with community — he always had people with him," says Tim Hill, of Halluci Nation (formerly known as A Tribe Called Red), for whom Wood has been a touring dancer for more than six years. "The kind of aura he brings around, it's always a very warm, light-hearted, inviting place. And he's like that with everybody."

"When he receives something, he always shares," explains Gerry Morita, artistic director of Mile Zero Dance, who has worked with Wood for more than a decade, and recently welcomed him as an artistic associate at Mile Zero. "He's a really strong mentor to other people, a teacher — he's always bringing along youth or the community as a whole."

If Wood's place in the community has been recognized by his peers since shortly after he began dancing at community centres and at the Edmonton International Street Performers Festival nearly 20 years ago, it's now also being acknowledged by the city's institutions. This year has seen him recognized not only with funding from the Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund but as the city's Indigenous Artist-in-Residence. Whatever else it might mean, the implications for what it says about his place in the community are not lost on Wood.

"I always didn't feel like I belonged everywhere. I always had to fight for my place to be, to prove that I belonged where I felt I belonged," Wood explains of his youth, and the drive it gave him to create spaces where people could feel part of something. "I didn't want to have that for people in my community. That's always been the most important component for me. Because I didn't want others to feel that same way." >

"I ALWAYS DIDN'T FEEL LIKE I BELONGED EVERYWHERE. I ALWAYS HAD TO FIGHT FOR MY PLACE TO BE, TO PROVE THAT I BELONGED WHERE I FELT I BELONGED."

— MATTHEW WOOD





That spirit is as true in his extracurricular work as in his art. As the creator and driving force behind projects including downtown block party Cypher Wild and Sampler Cafe, which brings DJ equipment and know-how to communities that would otherwise never have access, Wood gives a platform and a place to truly “be” for people who are often overlooked, if not outright rejected, by too many in our city.

“As I was coming up, I would hear people talking about these things — like, ‘Downtown is an eyesore,’” Wood explains.

“And I mean — I’m from there. I’m from these streets you speak of. You’re going to say that I’m a down-and-outer? How they going to say that about us?”

For all that his organizing has done to smash perceptions and bring people together, the remarkable thing about Wood is that his performances radiate the same energy. As anyone who has seen him can attest, Wood is electric: blending influences that range from Cree syllabics to New York City b-boys, he is a beacon of pure charisma, a powerful light who draws in and energizes anyone who can see him.

As he begins another phase of his career, though, Wood is not content to rest on either his community work or his charisma. It’s clear from talking to him that he has taken this recognition to heart, and wants to use it, naturally, to bring more to his community; to help teach, to help expand the minds of people who are used to viewing his art and heritage through narrow lenses.

“When I first started getting into hip hop, at the time I didn’t know why I was drawn to it,” he explains. “But I understand now: it had the same energy as the powwows my mom would take me to. It wasn’t just about dancing — it’s about, ‘Why do you dance, what’s your story? What do you bring to the table?’ It’s about giving back, to the art and the community.”

To that end, he is using both the Trust Fund and his position as artist-in-residence to dive deeper into his Cree heritage, learning both the language and the syllabics, to better incorporate them into his art. Because, though a large part of his work until now has been about blending worlds — something he remains proud of, noting, “We do need to show that Indigenous people can exist in this modern world as modern” — he is also coming to appreciate how vital it is to provide a link to histories and traditions that were violently ripped away.

“I want to put these things into my art. Our art forms are all a form of prayer which leads back to our language: the beadwork, the sewing, the regalia; it all comes from the syllabics,” Wood explains. “I’m at the point — I don’t want to be the Indian in the cupboard, to just dance and get put back into the same place. So this is not just about creating art, it’s about bringing our origin stories, showing my community that everything we do is art.”

If that is a hefty responsibility for a guy who, he notes a bit acidly, has been too often dismissed as “the hippity-hopper,” he is not concerned.

“It doesn’t feel like a burden,” Wood beams. “In the Cree tradition, dancing is prayer. So, it’s something I’ve been praying for.” ■

A Cree dancer in traditional regalia is captured in a dynamic dance pose. He wears a large, feathered headdress with a white pom-pom on top and a circular emblem on the forehead. His outfit is a vibrant mix of red, white, and blue, heavily adorned with long, flowing ribbons and fringes. He is wearing blue and white sneakers with gold bells on the soles. The background is a colorful mural with large, abstract shapes in shades of purple, orange, and teal. The ground is a light-colored, textured surface.

**“IN THE CREE TRADITION,
DANCING IS PRAYER.**

**SO, IT'S
SOMETHING
I'VE BEEN
PRAYING FOR.”**

– MATTHEW WOOD

A primer on **INCOME** & the cost of living in EDMONTON

NOTE TO READERS: Many of the income statistics are based on 2019 data. This is often the most recent available and it is the most representative of 'typical' situations since 2020 was largely under pandemic working conditions.

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.

INCOME is money that an individual or business receives for providing labour, producing a good or service, through government transfer, or investing in capital.

Income sources

- The majority of income for all family types is derived from employment.
- **On average 20% of lone-parent family income comes from government transfers like the Canada Child Benefit.**

Minimum wage

- is the lowest wage an employer can legally pay an employee. **The current minimum wage in Alberta is \$15 per hour** and \$13 per hour for those under 18 years of age.

In 2019:

- **11.9% of Edmontonians** earned \$15 per hour or less.
- **59.5% of minimum wage earners** in Edmonton were women.
- **70.7% of workers** in Alberta earning less than \$16 per hour were women.
- **75.5% in Alberta are 20 years** of age or older.

Living wage in Edmonton (2019): \$16.51

Living wage is the hourly wage that a person must make to provide for themselves, their families, and reach basic financial security, live with dignity, and participate in the community.

Living on minimum wage in Edmonton:

A single person working full-time (37.5 hrs/wk) earning minimum wage would take home **\$24,685 or \$475 per week**, after tax.

Monthly budget for a single female (age 19-30) working full-time at minimum wage

4 weeks at 37.5 hours at minimum wage	\$1900
AVERAGE RENT: 1 bedroom apartment in Edmonton	\$987
Monthly bus pass free with proof of income	\$0
Basic utilities	\$228.69
Basic internet (including GST)	\$68.25
Basic cell phone (including GST)	\$36.75
Tenant insurance	\$15
Groceries based on the Nutritious Food Basket Edmonton for a single female aged 19-30 (2018). Food only.	(\$62.89/wk) = \$251.56
Hygiene and non-food grocery expenses estimate (beverages, toiletries, cleaning supplies, etc.)	\$50
Laundry (2 loads weekly at \$2.50/wash & \$2.50/dry).	\$40
Savings	\$50
Prescriptions, dental, clothing, footwear, life insurance, entertainment, and all other.	\$222.75 (\$55.68/wk)

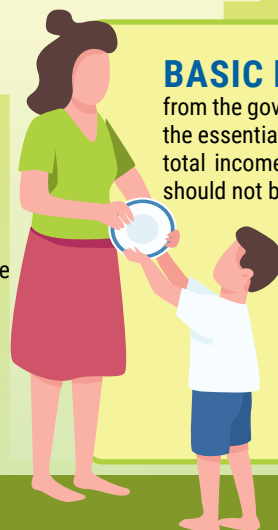
This budget provides an extremely modest living. It does not account for acquisition of furniture or other housewares, gifts, vacation, or other transportation beyond a bus pass.

Some months may have more than 4 paycheques per month which would provide an additional \$1885 over the course of the year. It does not take into account sick time, or employer reduced hours.

Any savings would be wiped out quickly if any major expense were to occur.

Working age single adults are especially insecure

- **16.3% of Albertans are spending 30% or more of their income on housing.**
- **42.7% are food bank users.**
- They make up the largest portion (31%) of social assistance users.
- **3x as likely to live in poverty.**
- 20% of singles aged 45 to 64 experience poverty for six straight years or more.
- **the number of people living alone has more than doubled from 1981 to 2016.**
- 70% of Albertans experiencing deep poverty are single.



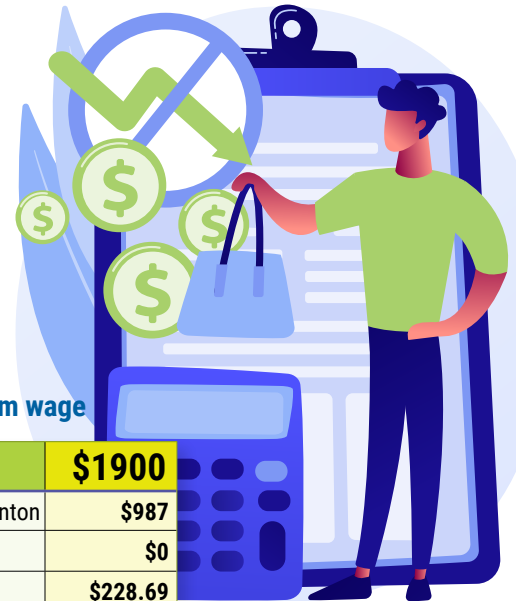
BASIC INCOME is an **unconditional** payment from the government to individuals or families, to cover the essential costs of living. It is then taxable based on total income. Earned income is not clawed back and should not be a liability for recipients of basic income.

Current forms of basic income in Canada:

- Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)
- GST Credit

UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME (available to all) if instituted properly will:

- reduce poverty,
- encourage employment,
- reduce the stigma associated with a physical or mental health-related disability,
- produce better health outcomes,
- improve quality of life.



Poverty

The condition of a person who is deprived of the resources, means, choices, and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic level of living standards and participation in society.

Poverty is not only about money, it also excludes people and is often disrespectful.

Poverty is time-consuming. For individuals to obtain assistance they constantly need to prove they are poor. Balancing that with having to seek out food, shelter, or other necessities can be overwhelming.



Canada's Poverty Line is calculated using the Market Basket Measure (MBM)

The MBM uses a specific set of goods and services that represent a modest standard of living including food, shelter, clothing, footwear, transportation, and other common expenses such as personal care, household needs, furniture, basic telephone service, school supplies and modest levels of reading material, recreation, and entertainment.

- A family is considered low-income if it cannot afford the MBM items.
- This indicator is community-sensitive to differences in the cost of living.
- **Using the MBM as a poverty measurement, approximately 10% of Edmontonians live in poverty.**

Working poor in Canada are defined as individuals between 18 and 64 years who live independently, are not students, and **earn at least \$3,000 a year** with an after-tax family income below the low-income threshold.

Most low-wage earners are adults, not youth. From July 2017 to June 2018, an average of 117,300 adults in Edmonton earned less than a living wage.



The low-income measure

A household is considered low income if its income is **below 50% of median household incomes**. Canada's median pre-tax income was \$36,760 for an individual and \$87,930 for families.

Low-income cut-offs (LICO) are income thresholds below which a family will devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing than the average family.

- A family is considered low income if it spends 20% more on these necessities.

LICO Rates for Edmonton vary based on family size (2018):

1 person	2 persons	3 persons	4 persons
\$21,481	\$26,143	\$32,554	\$40,614

Income inequality

Alberta is one of the most unequal provinces in Canada. The bottom 20% of income earners in Alberta spent an average of \$45,119 on household expenditures, **the top 20% spent \$130,222.**



Income gap in 2018, women made only **68.7 cents per every dollar men made.**

Income inequality in Edmonton has increased.

From 1982 to 2017, the real after-tax income (adjusted for inflation) in Edmonton:

- the top 0.1% of tax-filers saw a 56.8% increase.
- the bottom 50% saw a 3.2% increase.

Labour Force

PARTICIPATION & UNEMPLOYMENT

Labour force participation in Edmonton (2019)

- Is the percentage of the population 15 years and older that is working or actively seeking paid employment or self-employment.
- Edmonton's labour force participation rate was 72%.

Unemployment in Edmonton (2019)

A person is only considered unemployed if they are actively seeking a job.

- **The unemployment rate for men was 8.8% and for women 6.0%.**
- Youth (age 15-24) unemployment rate averaged 14.4%.
- **The average duration of unemployment was 17.8 weeks.**

Unemployment rates (2020)

Due to the pandemic's impact on the economy unemployment rates were much higher.

- The **overall unemployment** across Canada was **11.4%**.
- **Males** in Alberta age 15-24, had the highest unemployment at **24.3%**.
- **Females** in Alberta age 25-45, had the **lowest unemployment at 8.8%**.

Part-time work in Edmonton (2019)

17.4% of metro Edmonton residents worked part-time.

Multiple job-holders in Canada

- Multiple job-holders are driven by both necessity and choice.
- **14% of part-timers held multiple jobs**, only 5% work full-time.

Pandemic's toll on women

Nearly 100,000 more women in their prime working years (25-54) are not in the labour force compared to men (Feb. - Oct. 2020):

- **20,600 Canadian women fell out of the labour force** while nearly 68,000 men joined.
- **64% of people not in the labour force are women.**
- Women are more likely to work in industries that have been slower to recover, more vulnerable to lockdowns, and **less adaptable to working from home.**
- Women may be choosing to not go back to work due to **childcare responsibilities.**
- Women with children under the age of six **account for 66% of the exit from the labour force.**

OCCUPATIONAL SECTORS

WHERE EDMONTONIANS ARE EMPLOYED (2019)

Arts, Culture, Recreation & Sport	2%
Natural Resource, Agriculture	2%
Manufacturing & Utilities	4%
Management	8%
Natural & Applied Sciences	8%
Health	9%
Law & Social, Education & Community	11%
Trades, Transport, Equipment Operation	17%
Business, Finance, Administration	17%
Sales & Service	22%

GAPS in the Social Safety Net

The pandemic has exposed some of the gaps in our social safety net. Programs designed to help vulnerable populations have been trimmed or reworked by various governments, leaving a complicated system of claw-backs and penalties. Those living below the poverty line have little hope of improving their situation.

Pandemic effects on making ends meet

March 2020 was the largest decline in employment in 40 years. **2.1 million people worked fewer than half their normal hours.**

Pre-pandemic **46% of Canadians were less than \$200 away** from financial insolvency and **31% didn't earn enough to cover bills.**

IN 2019 CANADIANS OWED ABOUT **\$1.76 IN DEBT FOR EVERY DOLLAR** OF DISPOSABLE INCOME.

Our social safety net is complicated

Programs are difficult to navigate, require regular reporting, and include claw-backs that are triggered by an increase in household income.

Those trying to improve their financial situation could inadvertently trigger **a reduction in income or benefits by working more or by combining households.**

Alberta Works

Created to protect families from the impact of economic disaster.

- It is a last-resort income program.

Benefits are well below the Low-Income Measure in Canada of \$24,642.

- Includes basic health coverage such as prescriptions and dental.
- Income support only covers 37% of the basic monthly living costs (\$2,000) for a single Albertan.

To qualify, an individual has to liquidate assets with a few exceptions like a home or a car worth less than \$10,000.

It eliminates assets and results in deeper poverty.

Canada Emergency Response Benefit(CERB)/ Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB)

CERB/CRB assistance complicates things for those receiving social assistance.

- CERB/CRB doesn't cover reduced hours, employees with no work but not 'laid off,' or those who wish to leave unsafe working conditions.
- Alberta is treating CERB/CRB as earned income. A person on Alberta Works will have their CRB reduced dollar-for-dollar.

- CERB/CRB will be factored into income calculations, possibly reducing the rent subsidies.

You can't access benefits if you leave your job to care for children.

The Caregiving Benefit only applies if the child is under 12 and their daycare or school is closed.



Working while receiving Alberta Works

Benefits are reduced by 25% once they earn more money than their threshold:

- **SINGLE INDIVIDUALS & SINGLE PARENTS** – \$230.
- **COUPLES** – \$115 (for each working adult).
- **DEPENDENT CHILDREN** not attending school – \$350.

- Working to increase income will result in benefits reduced to zero before they earn enough to reach the poverty line.

- A family member who is asked to work extra hours could trigger a claw-back in benefits.

- This creates a barrier for women who need financial autonomy from their partner.
- The claw-back system does not provide a stable or reliable source of support.



Cutbacks due to CERB 10,000 FEWER ALBERTA HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED ALBERTA WORKS DUE TO CERB ELIGIBILITY. 92% OF THESE HOUSEHOLDS ARE SINGLE ADULTS AND SINGLE PARENTS. 75% LIVE IN EITHER EDMONTON OR CALGARY.

Employment Insurance (EI) REGULAR BENEFITS ARE 55% OF THE AVERAGE INSURABLE WEEKLY EARNINGS UP TO \$595/WEEK.

Enhancements due to COVID:

- CERB/CRB benefits the self-employed and freelance workers who would not qualify for EI.
- The qualifying period was reduced to 26 weeks and a worker only needed 120 hours to qualify.

Limitations: Many workers don't qualify due to the type of work available including:

- short-term contracts or temporary agency employment.
- employers who lay off during slow and shoulder seasons, or manufacturers and tech firms that depend on contractual work.
- service-sector workers with erratic, part-time, or temporary schedules.

Pre-pandemic, EI regular benefits were going to fewer than 30% of the unemployed in Canada's three largest labour markets: Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

- In 2019 service-sector hourly workers averaged 28.3 hours weekly (including overtime). The qualifying hours for EI is based on a 35-hour week.
- This especially affects women, racialized workers, new immigrants, young adults, and working poor that tend to be in service jobs.



Persons with Disabilities in Alberta

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)

To be eligible for AISH a person's disability must severely and permanently impair them from finding paid employment.



In 2019/2020 **66,816** individuals received AISH.

Who is on AISH?

Of those recipients on AISH, (Feb. 2021):

- 43.7% have physical disabilities
- 30.5% have mental illness disorders
- 25.7% have cognitive disorders
- 86% are single
- 42% of recipients are aged 50 to 64
- Are most likely to live in Edmonton (34.8%) or Calgary (29.4%)

Adults who are disabled but do not qualify for AISH

A single person with a disability on Alberta Works receives **\$10,837**.

A single person who qualifies for AISH benefits receives \$20,222, nearly double.

Living on AISH

A single person living on AISH receives **\$20,222 per year. \$4,422 below Canada's low-income threshold.**

Applying for subsidized housing and low-income discounts takes a toll. Having to ask for, and prove, that you need financial assistance is degrading and time-consuming.

The stress of managing a disability on a low-income budget often takes its toll in stress and mental health.

Ability to work

You are encouraged to work and earn income while on AISH.

A single individual can earn up to **\$1,072 per month before their benefit is reduced.** Between \$1,072 - \$2,009 is 50% exempt and then reduced dollar-for-dollar.

- A person can work only about 17 hours per week at minimum wage (3.5 hours per day) without it affecting their benefit.
- Some employers do not want to take the time to train someone for so few hours.

Finding work while disabled

There are organizations that assist people with disabilities in finding work including Employabilities, AbilityCanada, and Inclusion Alberta.

Employers and employees can receive disability-related employment supports.

COVID Supports and AISH

A one-time non-taxable payment of \$600 in recognition of the expenses incurred by persons with disabilities during the pandemic.

Monthly budget for a single 55-year-old male living on AISH

Paid on the 1st of the month so some expenses need to be saved from the previous month to pay it on time.	\$1,685
Housing (subsidized rent, including utilities)	\$568
Monthly bus pass free* with proof of income	\$0
Basic internet**	\$13
Basic cell phone (including GST)	\$36.75
Tenant insurance	\$15
Groceries based on the Nutritious Food Basket Edmonton for a single male aged 51-70 years. Food only \$71.22/week.	\$284.88
Hygiene and non-food grocery expenses estimate (beverages, toiletries, cleaning supplies, etc.)	\$50
Medications not covered by AISH	\$400
Medical therapy not covered by AISH	\$39
Laundry (2 loads per week at \$2.50/wash and \$2.50/dry)	\$40
Clothing	\$50
Savings, entertainment, household goods, and all other	\$188.37

* As of February 1, 2021 the low-income transit pass is free for those making less than \$29,070.

**Internet for Good is available from Telus for 24 months. After that, regular pricing. Pandemic-related expenses, and a GST rebate are not taken into account in this budget.

Child Benefits

Alberta Child Care Subsidy

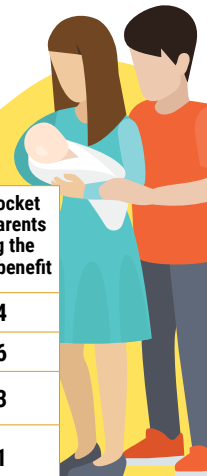
FOR DAYCARE	Alberta Child Care Subsidy maximum benefit	Median monthly child care costs in Edmonton	Out-of-Pocket cost for parents receiving the maximum benefit
Infant (under 12 mo.)	\$741	\$1,075	\$334
Toddler (12-18 mo.)	\$741	\$917	\$176
19 to 36 month	\$644	\$917	\$273
Pre-schooler (37 month to Grade 1)	\$644	\$875	\$231

The benefit allowance is based on income, child's age, and type of care (subsidies are lower for day homes). The benefit does not align with the typical pricing structure of daycare (infant, toddler, pre-schooler). A birthday would trigger a change in the amount of out-of-pocket expenses even if the child was still considered a toddler.

Subsidies falling short

Child care subsidies were increased by 18% from the 2008 rate. But if rates had kept up with inflation in Alberta, they would have been 17.7% more than the increase.

The benefit is complicated to calculate, with many variables and rules. You must apply and be assessed before you could know if you are eligible and for how much.



ECF @ WORK

In 2020, 22% (\$437,900) of COVID relief funding distributed by Edmonton Community Foundation went to the distribution of food and other basic needs.

Role of Charities

In Canada, charitable organizations play a crucial role in the social safety net by providing important services not provided by government services.

- Charities rely on local donations of labour and money to provide services efficiently.
- There is no guarantee that services are available equitably or programming won't be cut due to lack of funding.



Doing more with less

- Nearly 40% of Canadians say their donations have decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Service need has increased as have costs to ensure the health of their staff and volunteers.
- They are doing more with fewer donations and volunteers.

THE JEWEL OF EDMONTON

HOW A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION IS CONNECTING NORTH AND SOUTH – AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

BY JASLEEN MAHIL

AT 18,000 ACRES, the North Saskatchewan River Valley System is the largest urban park in Canada and the 11th largest in the world.

The River Valley Alliance (RVA) is a not-for-profit organization working on connecting this vast area by establishing one connected trail, 100 kilometres long, from Devon to Fort Saskatchewan.

Kristine Archibald has been with the organization for seven years and became executive director in January. The RVA was created almost 20 years ago by volunteers who wanted to connect the river valley, and is made up of six shareholders representing the municipalities that border the river valley area. “Our mandate is [to] preserve, protect, enhance but also connect ... that’s the overriding mandate of what we are doing,” she says.

The RVA has already created 75 kilometres of trails, and Phase 1 of RVA’s plan of action has seen the development of a number of other large projects, including the 100th Street Funicular and the Terwillegar Park Footbridge. At 262 metres long, it’s the second-longest stressed-ribbon footbridge in the world.

Currently, two other pedestrian bridges are being developed. The Highway 15 underslung pedestrian bridge will connect the river valley from Sturgeon County to Fort Saskatchewan, and is scheduled to open in 2022. A footbridge from Edmonton to Strathcona County is also in early planning stages. These two bridges, once completed, will provide full connectivity along the 75 kilometres of trails.

Looking forward, Phase 2 will include the creation of the remaining 25 kilometres of trails in the southwest quadrant of Edmonton.

The RVA secures funding for projects from federal, provincial and municipal levels of government. All in, the cost of Phase 1 is \$90 million, of which \$50 million is from the provincial government, \$30 million from the federal government and the rest funded by municipalities. All projects in Phase 1 are fully funded, except for municipal funding on the construction phase of the Edmonton-to-Strathcona County footbridge. This will be up for budget deliberations in the fall.

From site views and bridge counters, the RVA has seen increased use of the river valley. “We were already seeing so much increased usage with the trails and awareness [of them] ... but COVID almost tripled [usage] in some areas, if not more,” says Archibald. One of the organization’s goals moving forward is to gather measurable data to verifiably show how many people are using the trail system.


The hope? To create a world-class trail. “You have probably heard of the Cabot Trail, Bruce Trail and the West Coast Trail ... these are tourist destinations where people travel just to access these trails, see different parts of the world and explore nature in those areas. Ours could certainly be one of them,” says Archibald.

“We are already ‘Festival City’ — this is just another thing to draw people in and show them, and be proud of what we have,” she says. “It’s the jewel of our region; it really is.” ■

LISTEN IN:

River Valley Alliance is the keynote speaker at Edmonton Community Foundation’s virtual annual meeting. Stream it live at ecfoundation.org on June 9th at 11 a.m.





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