

LEGACY IN ACTION

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HAND-IN-HAND

Connecting food & community resources

bEAT this

The impact of food insecurity

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Cover photo by Daniel Wood Photography

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Martin Garber-Conrad

Martin Garber-Conrad

Eight days after the Government of Alberta declared a public health state of emergency, Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) established the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund to support Edmonton's charitable sector through the pandemic.

On May 19, we received an additional \$2.2 million to support the community through the Government of Canada's Emergency Community Support Fund.

To date, ECF has provided more than \$3.7 million to help Edmonton's most vulnerable citizens during COVID-19.

Trends emerged as we began issuing these grants to dozens of charities. Technology support and mental health programs were two key trends, but by far the largest need was food security.

Of the \$3.7 million we have provided for COVID-19 relief, \$1.17 million has been allocated to food and basic needs programs.

It was alarming to see the number of organizations reaching out for help to provide their clients with something so many of us take for granted. Agencies that typically provide unrelated services were being asked by their clients to help them feed their families. And those agencies came to ECF to make that happen.

Food security has been on our radar for years. It's a problem that we have been addressing since 1990 when we issued our first grant to Meals on Wheels to help with food delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting several weaknesses in our city's food security. Many neighbourhoods are in food deserts — areas without grocery stores. For Edmontonians who rely on services like Meals on Wheels to deliver food or Drive

Happiness for volunteer transportation services, COVID-19 created a desperate situation of uncertainty.

Fortunately, ECF was there to help organizations modify or continue their operations. We helped Meals on Wheels purchase new food handling equipment that enables them to provide more than 700 meals a day to their clients. Drive Happiness was able to recruit 60 more volunteer drivers and upgrade safety measures in their vehicles to get seniors to and from doctors' appointments and grocery stores. But the fact remains that food insecurity continues to be a real problem in Edmonton.

In this issue of *Legacy in Action*, we look at food security in our city. Our cover story (page 12) about the Edmonton Chinese Cultural Legacy Fund examines how food ties into our cultural identity, and how the fund is building bridges between cultures.

On page 10, we look at how the Islamic Family and Social Services Association is strengthening food security in Edmonton's Muslim community through its halal food bank.

We also share how Fresh Routes is tackling food deserts (page 5) by opening pop-up food markets in low-income neighbourhoods.

And on page 16, you'll learn how the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative is curtailing food waste while helping to feed hundreds of newcomers in Edmonton.

I encourage you to visit our website, where you'll find dozens more stories about the amazing work that donors and charities are doing in our city during COVID-19 and beyond. We hope this issue inspires you to think about how we can all take action to make Edmonton stronger.

Fresh IDEAS

FRESH ROUTES REMOVES SOCIO-ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD

BY: DAVID RYNING

It's early evening on a Thursday in mid-summer and perfect T-shirt weather — not too hot and not too cold. Wispy clouds drift across a sky of brilliant blue; behind them, the sun is still high above the horizon. There is a slight movement in the air that could charitably be called a breeze. As a constant stream of traffic hums along 118th Avenue, cyclists and pedestrians pass local businesses and buildings adorned with colourful street art. This is a neighbourhood embracing summer while still finding its way through the social and economic shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the parking lot of the Alberta Avenue Community Centre stands one such sign of reawakening. A delivery truck is parked beside tables covered with boxes full of fresh produce, bread and eggs, manned by volunteers. A sign on the truck proclaims that the Fresh Routes mobile grocery store is back, enticing a steady stream of customers to scout its offerings.

Fresh Routes, a not-for-profit social enterprise, began in Calgary in 2018 as a pilot project of the Leftovers Foundation. Since 2019, the organization also operates in Edmonton, with more expansion on the horizon. The goal of Fresh Routes is to bring fresh, nutritious and affordable food — sourced in Edmonton, primarily from H&W Produce — into communities where low incomes, residents' limited mobility or lack of transportation options can create barriers to shopping. The feeling is something like a neighbourhood farmers' market, and that is no accident.

Fresh Routes' co-founder and CEO Lourdes Juan believes the organization can play a vital role in community-building.

“By focusing on food access, one of the pillars of food security, we aim to work as part of a larger system towards realizing a vision of building sustainable, equitable and inclusive systems that enable all Canadians to live healthy lives,” Juan said in an email interview.

While the mobile grocery store might be the most visible, it is only one of several

Fresh Routes programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the mobile grocery store program was suspended from March until early June. In its place, an emergency delivery service and a door-to-door delivery service for seniors and high-risk customers continued to supply groceries while keeping vulnerable people safe. In addition, the ongoing Fresh Baskets program remains available to Indigenous communities and low-income housing complexes that are isolated from grocery supply chains.

What all the Fresh Routes programs have in common is a commitment to fill gaps in nutritious food access, regardless of customers' resources.

“One of our primary values as an organization is ensuring dignified food access,” said Morgan Allen, Fresh Routes Edmonton City Lead. “Part of that is allowing people choice and not creating barriers through excessive disclosure about someone's circumstances, which can make it feel anxiety-provoking.”

In addition, Allen said, all community members regardless, of income, are >

THE GOAL OF FRESH ROUTES IS TO BRING FRESH, NUTRITIOUS AND AFFORDABLE FOOD – SOURCED IN EDMONTON, PRIMARILY FROM H&W PRODUCE – INTO COMMUNITIES WHERE LOW INCOMES, RESIDENTS' LIMITED MOBILITY OR LACK OF TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS CAN CREATE BARRIERS TO SHOPPING.





encouraged to shop at the mobile grocery stores. As a non-profit social enterprise, Fresh Routes seeks to generate revenue that can then be put back into its operations, allowing expansion into other areas. It also helps with the community-building that drives the Fresh Routes idea.

result of that aspect of the business model. “Our committee really appreciated that this project simultaneously addresses multiple issues: food deserts and access to nutritious, affordable food, social connection, waste reduction and local food production through their partnerships

“ONE OF OUR PRIMARY VALUES AS AN ORGANIZATION IS ENSURING DIGNIFIED FOOD ACCESS. PART OF THAT IS ALLOWING PEOPLE CHOICE AND NOT CREATING BARRIERS THROUGH EXCESSIVE DISCLOSURE ABOUT SOMEONE’S CIRCUMSTANCES, WHICH CAN MAKE IT FEEL ANXIETY-PROVOKING.”

– Morgan Allen

“It’s really important to us that we’re creating spaces where folks don’t feel a sense of stigma,” Allen said. “We’re all going to come together and enjoy this vibrant social base, hopefully get to know our neighbours and build some community there as well.”

The community-centric approach has led to a number of valuable partnerships with other organizations.

Craig Stumpf-Allen, director of grants and community engagement for Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), said ECF’s support was a direct

with farmers,” Stumpf-Allen said.

Back at the Alberta Avenue location, the customers circle the table, checking out green peppers, strawberries, apples, jalapenos, cucumbers and onions. A few metres away, a white-haired man in a baseball cap sits in a lawn chair, holding court and engaging three or four passers-by in conversation. Laughter rings out at his repartee. If Fresh Routes’ goal was to bring healthy food to underserved communities, it’s definitely created that farmers’ market feel: part shopping excursion and part community block party. ■



Residents choose fresh, local produce at Fresh Routes in Twin Parks



Part community, part local grocer, weekly pop-ups like this one in Twin Parks help eliminate food deserts

For more information about Fresh Routes, its programs, schedules, locations and volunteer opportunities, visit freshroutes.ca.
For information about bringing a mobile grocery store to your community, contact Morgan Allen at morgan@freshroutes.ca.



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BEYOND FOOD

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN FOOD AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

BY: EMILY RENDELL-WATSON

The Beyond Food program began at the Edmonton Food Bank when it learned that many of its clients weren't connected with other services in the community.

"We felt that in order for people to deal with their food insecurity ... they really needed solid connections with groups beyond the food bank," said Marjorie Bencz, executive director of the Edmonton Food Bank.

"WE FELT THAT IN ORDER FOR PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH THEIR FOOD INSECURITY ... THEY REALLY NEEDED SOLID CONNECTIONS WITH GROUPS BEYOND THE FOOD BANK."

– Marjorie Bencz

The idea was born out of surveys done in 2015 and 2018, where food bank clients indicated they needed better relationships with other organizations to help with literacy, education, employment, mental health, food security and more.

When the program launched in November 2018, the Food Bank partnered initially with Canadian Mental Health and the City of Edmonton, which provided staff with expertise in counselling, housing and mental health.

Over time, other partners came forward with free services to offer, such as the Salvation Army helping with taxes and the Learning Centre Literacy Association with reading and writing. Volunteers also pitch in with resume-writing and interview skills, and there have been four job fairs at the Food Bank to match employers with people looking for jobs.

"We've always tried to refer people to 211 and other connections, but often, people make a better connection when the person is right there," Bencz said.

"It really is about partnerships and relationships, and we couldn't do any of this work without other wonderful agencies in the community."

Bencz is clear that Beyond Food is about building up the community and pointing people in the right direction.

"Our goal wasn't to take away from anything other groups are doing because we appreciate what they're doing in the community. We're just trying to pull those resources a little bit closer to people that need them," she explains.

Beyond Food is able to operate because of a three-year Edmonton Community Foundation grant under Foundation Directed Initiatives.

"They were really quick to come to the table and respond in a positive way to something that was a little outside the box," Bencz said.

"We've really appreciated the relationship with the Edmonton Community Foundation over the years because they've always been willing to look at really practical programs that are serving people directly."

Before the COVID-19 pandemic began, Bencz estimates there were about 16 people a day accessing the Beyond Food services.

"WE'VE REALLY APPRECIATED THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EDMONTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OVER THE YEARS BECAUSE THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN WILLING TO LOOK AT REALLY PRACTICAL PROGRAMS THAT ARE SERVING PEOPLE DIRECTLY."

– Marjorie Bencz

The pandemic has made it more challenging to operate, but clients are still able to access services online and can make appointments to come in, instead of the previous drop-in model.

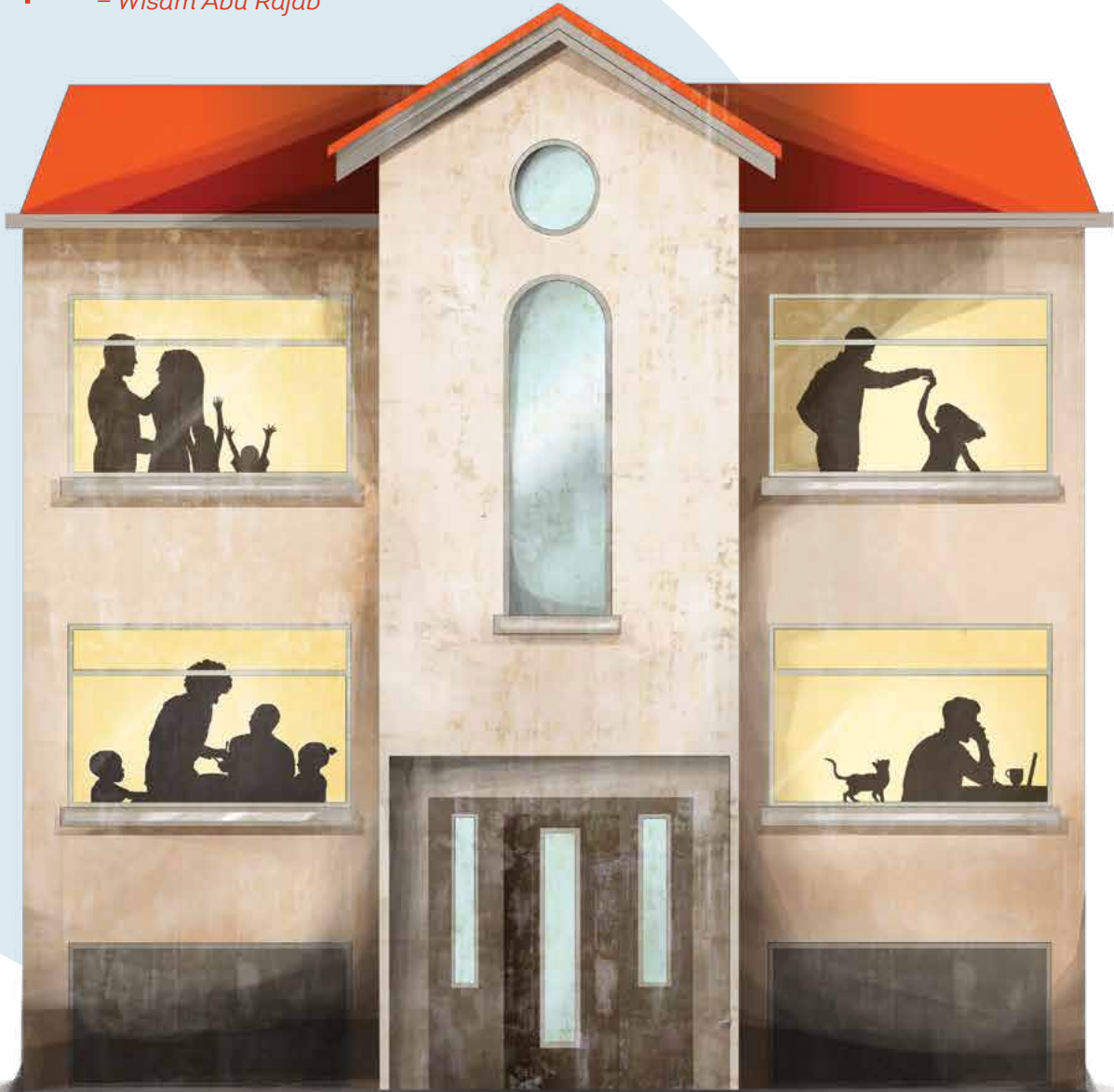
That continuity is crucial for clients in need of support, which is a familiar feeling for program coordinator Wisam Abu Rajab.

When Abu Rajab arrived in Alberta from Dubai five years ago, he was in a similar situation to many of the clients he works with.

He remembers the struggle to find a job and the challenges at the beginning as he tried to settle into his new life.

“WE WANT THEM TO BE ABLE TO RELY ON THEMSELVES SO THEY CAN HELP THEMSELVES AND THE COMMUNITY.”

– Wisam Abu Rajab



“So when I see someone who is trying to find a job and they can do that, it makes me feel happy,” says Abu Rajab.

One of the most valuable services they offer, he said, is preparing clients for safety training, to help Edmontonians who are seeking work be more competitive in the job

market. That ranges from first aid to forklift and confined spaces training and more.

“We try to train people and help them find a job, so we talk to them about opportunities,” Abu Rajab says. “We want them to be able to rely on themselves so they can help themselves and the community.”

Abu Rajab hopes to see the Beyond Food program continue to grow and offer more opportunities, training and services.

As Benz puts it, it’s really about “touching people’s lives and making it a bit better for them.” ■

NOURISHING *Islamic* CULTURE

SOCIAL SERVICES ORGANIZATION STARTED AS A BASEMENT FOOD BANK

BY: CAROLINE BARLOTT PHOTOS BY LIAM MACKENZIE

Police found a distressed 72-year-old woman in Sherwood Park earlier this year. She was lost and unable to communicate in English with the officer who found her. She showed the officer her Islamic Family and Social Services Association (IFSSA) client card and they took her to IFSSA's Belvedere office where staff connected her with their extensive language network, finding someone who could speak with her.

"FOOD IS HELD VERY CLOSE TO WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO. MUSLIMS HAVE A DIETARY LAW. THE LAW IS ABOUT MAINTAINING THE SANCTITY OF FOOD AND WHAT COMES INTO OUR BODIES."

— Omar Yaqub

They learned that she was the sole guardian to an orphaned 13-year-old girl, and that she had been trying to find IFSSA to access its food bank, which focuses on providing clients with food adhering to halal Muslim dietary requirements. After receiving food, hygiene supplies and COVID-19 supports, she was eager to get home. The staff booked the lady a ride home, provided her with food, connected her with essential supports in the community and made sure she would not be socially isolated while physical distancing.

"This story may be unique to COVID-times but it highlights the diverse population we normally serve. While we've had to adapt



our work during COVID, a lot of what we're doing — and what we did for that woman — is business as usual," says Omar Yaqub, who works on partnership development at IFSSA.

Halal food hampers are part of the many services IFSSA offers its clients. The hampers focus on staple ingredients including lentils, grains, rice, cooking oil and protein, as well as pasta and cereal. All the food adheres to halal guidelines, which Yaqub says is integral to the identity of many of IFSSA's clients.

"Food is held very close to who we are and what we do. Muslims have a dietary law. The law is about maintaining the sanctity of food and what comes into our bodies. Muslims believe that what we ingest has a spiritual dimension. This requires us to abstain from certain items and give blessings when we eat," says Yaqub. Volunteers painstakingly go through

ingredient lists and screen donated goods to ensure surprises like meat by-products or alcohol don't otherwise sneak into food hampers.

In 1992, IFSSA began primarily as a food bank operating out of a home's small basement. Over the years, staff positions were added, enabling the organization to

"NOW WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE MYRIAD LOGISTICS OF SOURCING LENTILS OR OIL; NOW WE CAN DEDICATE MORE TIME TO WORKING ON ADDRESSING A CLIENT'S OTHER CHALLENGES."

— Omar Yaqub

do more within the Edmonton community. IFSSA now acts as a holistic service provider, operating out of three different locations with more than 20 staff.

In 2015, IFSSA partnered with the Edmonton Food Bank, which provides staple items such as lentils and gleaned foods to the organization. The partnership

where they can speak about the challenges they are facing. Then, they're connected with an outreach worker, the organization's help-line or external supports. "One of the areas where we're transitioning is changing the goal of intake from being about assessing eligibility to it being a starting point for a conversation where they set goals, and

"ONE OF THE AREAS WHERE WE'RE TRANSITIONING IS CHANGING THE GOAL OF INTAKE FROM BEING ABOUT ASSESSING ELIGIBILITY TO IT BEING A STARTING POINT FOR A CONVERSATION WHERE THEY SET GOALS, AND CONNECT WITH RESOURCES THAT HELP THEM ACHIEVE THOSE GOALS."

– Omar Yaqub



enabled IFSSA to serve more individuals within a single month in 2020 than they did for all of 2015. A year later, Edmonton Community Foundation helped fund the hiring of the organization's first executive director, further allowing IFSSA to be proactive in addressing issues of food insecurity.

"Now we don't have to worry about the myriad logistics of sourcing lentils or oil; now we can dedicate more time to working on addressing a client's other challenges," says Yaqub. Those other challenges — lack of employment, affordable housing, social isolation and language barriers — all play a role as root causes of food insecurity, he added. IFSSA has responded with programs that foster healthy relationships while providing business training, therapeutic support, domestic violence counselling and youth support.

When a client comes to access the food bank, there's an assessment conducted

connect with resources that help them achieve those goals," says Yaqub.

IFSSA is also working to ensure the safety of its clients during the COVID-19

pandemic. The number of families the organization helps has increased by 40 per cent since January, highlighting a drastic increase in food insecurity.

Yaqub has many stories of families that accessed the food bank and saw benefits that go beyond improved food security. Several clients, many Syrian refugees, started their own home cooking business after taking part in one of the IFSSA's training programs. ■





CULTURE CLUB

Keeping Edmonton's Chinese culture thriving for generations to come

BY: LISA CATTERALL
PHOTOS BY DANIEL WOOD PHOTOGRAPHY



Since the 1890s, when the first Chinese citizens arrived in Edmonton, the city has been home to a large and growing Chinese community. Over the years, Chinese families and businesses have shaped the city's development through arts and culture, while also driving economic growth. Today, through the Edmonton Chinese Cultural Legacy Fund, three Chinese-born Edmontonians hope to continue that growth, building bridges across generations and cultures.

As a young professional who has lived and worked around the world, Keren Tang has a keen appreciation for multiculturalism. Born in Chengdu, China, and raised in Connecticut, she taught Indigenous youth in New Mexico and worked as a community organizer in Montreal before moving to Edmonton in 2012. Since then, her community-building efforts have included supporting refugee and immigrant families through the Edmonton Multicultural Coalition, helping to create government policy that encourages community health, and even running for Edmonton city council.

"My focus has always been very multicultural. The city I want to live in, and that I want to raise my family in, recognizes and celebrates all the different

elements of different populations," she says. "As a newcomer myself, I'm also very keen



on building bridges between cultures and generations. It benefits the whole community when those connections exist."

In 2018, eager to continue driving positive change in the city she now calls home, Tang joined Edmonton Community Foundation's (ECF) board of directors. As part of her new role, she travelled to Victoria for a conference hosted by Community Foundations of Canada to learn more about what

other foundations across the country are doing to meet the evolving needs of their communities. >

"MY FOCUS HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY MULTICULTURAL. THE CITY I WANT TO LIVE IN, AND THAT I WANT TO RAISE MY FAMILY IN, RECOGNIZES AND CELEBRATES ALL THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF DIFFERENT POPULATIONS."

- Keren Tang

KEREN TANG

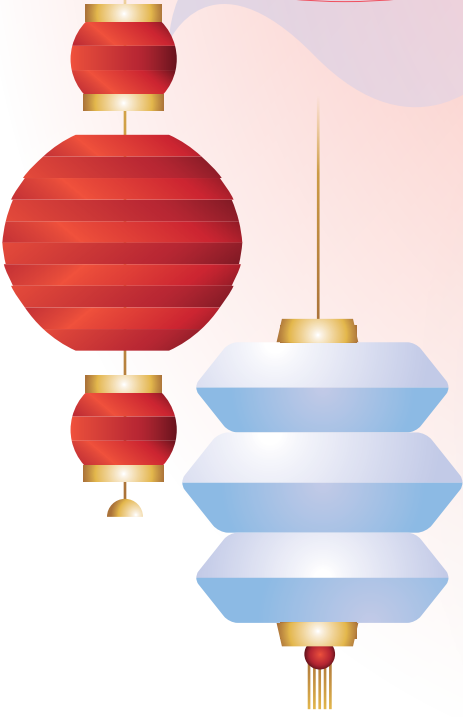


“I’m pretty new to philanthropy so there was a huge learning curve ahead of me,” she says. “At that conference, I met the board chair of the Victoria Foundation, who was Chinese-Canadian, and she had recently started the Victoria Chinese Cultural Legacy Fund. That conversation really got the wheels spinning.”

Tang returned to Edmonton, still processing the concepts she’d learned in Victoria. She wanted to create a similar impact, finding a way to celebrate and promote Chinese culture, heritage and history. She began reaching out to friends and contacts in the local Chinese community to discuss the idea of developing a fund.

“We’re lucky to live in a city with a strong, growing, local economy. It’s what has attracted so many of us here in the first place,” she says. “For generations, people have been moving to Edmonton for the jobs and putting down roots because they’ve fallen in love with the city. I wanted to find a way to give back.”

While talking to local businessman Ning Yang, the idea for the Edmonton Chinese Cultural Legacy Fund began to take shape. Yang then shared the idea with Dr. William Han, a family doctor working in Edmonton’s south side. By December 2019, their idea became a reality.



“FOR GENERATIONS, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN MOVING TO EDMONTON FOR THE JOBS AND PUTTING DOWN ROOTS BECAUSE THEY’VE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THE CITY. I WANTED TO FIND A WAY TO GIVE BACK.”

– Keren Tang



NING YANG

"ARTS, CULTURE, ENTERTAINMENT, LANGUAGE – THESE THINGS ARE ALL IMPORTANT PARTS OF A COMMUNITY'S IDENTITY AND, THEREFORE, ITS OVERALL WELL-BEING," – *Dr. William Han*

"I like it here in Edmonton. I like that we treat everyone equally. Newcomers, refugees, white-collar, blue-collar, everyone has a chance here," says Yang. "When Keren told me about ECF and what we could do, I thought, 'Of course! It's a great idea.'"

Yang, who moved to Edmonton in 2009, was born and raised in Jiangsu province in eastern China. His experience living and working in cities around the world was similar to Tang's, and he also shared the desire to promote and preserve Chinese culture.

"In the Chinese community, most people are working so hard, they spend lots of time and money on their kids, lots of time at work, everyone has two or three jobs. As we build our lives here in Edmonton, and build businesses and start to be successful here, we have a responsibility to give back," he says. "With the fund, we hope to do good

things. We want our community to understand that this is an option that exists [for giving back], and that it can support our community in ways that we choose."

For Han, supporting the fund was also an easy decision. As a family physician, he works with a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals, taking a holistic approach to health. In his view, celebrating heritage and culture is an important part of well-being.

"The fund is a great way to support overall health. Arts, culture, entertainment, language — these things are all important parts of a community's identity and, therefore, its overall well-being," he says.

"I will be very proud to see the impact this

"I LIKE IT HERE IN EDMONTON. I LIKE THAT WE TREAT EVERYONE EQUALLY. NEWCOMERS, REFUGEES, WHITE-COLLAR, BLUE-COLLAR, EVERYONE HAS A CHANCE HERE." – *Ning Yang*



DR. WILLIAM HAN

fund will have as a long-term legacy in our community."

For all three donors, the most exciting feature of the fund is the potential for a generational impact.

"I have a daughter and for me, it's very important that she be able to keep this cultural part of her identity and be proud of it. I know when I was growing up I was ashamed of it, but I want it to be different for her," says Tang. "I want her to be part of a supportive community, and this fund is just one way I'm hoping to help create that." ■

CULTURAL FLAVOURS

Food is perhaps one of the most important expressions of culture, connecting people across oceans, borders and generations. We asked these donors to share their favourite traditional restaurants and dishes.

SOUTH SILK ROAD RESTAURANT *(5552 Calgary Trail)*

"I really enjoy the South Silk Road. They specialize in Yunnan cuisine, which is the province just south of Sichuan – it's very hard to find proper Sichuan cuisine in Edmonton," says Tang. "Their spicy wontons are the perfect combination of sweet and spicy."

LIUYISHOU HOT POT *(168, 9700 105 Ave.)*

"Hot pot always feels very 'homey' to me, and Liuyishou Hot Pot does a great job of it. The flavour here is close to the recipes I grew up with so it's very familiar and comforting to me," says Tang.

LUCY'S SWEETS AND HAZELDEAN BAKERY *(9627 66 Ave.)*

"The Hazeldean Bakery has been around for a long time, Lucy took over just a few years ago. They have all kinds of breads, buns and desserts, but what they're best known for is their donuts. Every year they win awards for those donuts – they're so good!" says Yang.

A BETTER END TO BEST-BEFORE

By: Caroline Barlott
Photos by Mat Simpson

GROCERY RUN REDIRECTS SURPLUS FOOD TO THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

Yodit Libab knows what it's like to have less money than what's needed to properly feed a family. In 2009, she arrived in Canada as a refugee with three children and high hopes for a life in Edmonton that would be far easier than what she had experienced. She'd been a civil engineer back home, but language and cultural barriers meant Libab couldn't initially find work in Edmonton. For six months, the only food on the family's table was milk and bread.

Now, Libab works as a broker for the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative (MCHB), where she works directly with people experiencing those same challenges. Through the co-operative, brokers from around the world help clients with everything from improving food security

to finding affordable housing options to securing mental health supports and employment opportunities.

In 2016, Libab and other MCHB brokers were teaching women about parenting in two cultures. "We kept hearing their stories. I was

Meanwhile, Maria Mayan at the University of Alberta had conducted a study that looked at improving the healthy weight and eating habits of pregnant women in Edmonton who came from four African communities. The research showed that most

"There is immigration trauma, language barriers, structural barriers, with everything coming from poverty. A significant number of families were actually paying 75 upwards to 100 per cent of their total income on housing. That leaves very little to pay for basic needs."

– Julia Tran

concerned about them," says Libab. It was clear that many of them struggled with food insecurity, just as she once had.

of the women could not afford to meet basic food needs, never mind provide nutritious food choices at each meal.





MCHB responded by creating Grocery Run, a program that connects hundreds of immigrant and refugee families every week with culturally appropriate, healthful food that has been rescued, donated or purchased.

“There is immigration trauma, language barriers, structural barriers, with everything coming from poverty. A significant number of families were actually paying 75 upwards to 100 per cent of their total income on housing. That leaves very little to pay for basic needs,” says Julia Tran, community resource co-ordinator for Grocery Run.

“One thing we are really tied to here at the co-op is the dignity of the families, and so we try to not force any families to eat any foods they aren’t comfortable with. That’s why the engagement with communities was so important.”

– Julia Tran

Grocery Run redirects surplus food from organizations including Cobs Bread, The Organic Box and The Little Potato Company to help families meet their same-day food needs. Families are outfitted with weekly hampers that include staples such as lentils or rice, along with fresh fruits, vegetables and bread. Other agencies in the

city may supplement the minimal resources of a family, says Tran, but the Grocery Run might provide the only food the family gets all week.

The food might just be approaching its best-before date but is still perfectly suitable for consumption. The model is a triple-win — saving food from the landfill, while benefiting the community socially and economically.

Tran says the co-operative also took the time to determine what food the families would want to see in the hampers. Many mainstream supports include processed foods that MCHB clients would not see back home. Some of the food might be unfamiliar or it might go against cultural beliefs — for example, canned goods are viewed by some cultures as unsafe, says Tran.

“One thing we are really tied to here at the co-op is the dignity of the families, and so we try to not force any families to eat any foods they aren’t comfortable with. That’s why the engagement with communities was so important,” says Tran.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Grocery Run was serving 100 families but that number has now increased to 430 as >





many more families face financial barriers. In the past, the organization would receive donations from the Leftovers Foundation of food that was slightly damaged or nearing its best-before date, but the pandemic has created shortages that affected that supply.

As a result, Edmonton Community Foundation donated funds to purchase local food from various vendors, including Sunfresh Farms and NPS Farms. And now, the majority of hampers are delivered to ensure the safety of clients, many of whom are seniors, immunocompromised or differently-abled.

Meanwhile, Tran says, the pandemic is making the MCHB reconsider how it looks at food as a resource and begin working toward restructuring Edmonton's food system.

“We’re looking at the production of food and food agriculture as well as social enterprises. A lot of our families are farmers or previously had micro-enterprises, either food stalls or vendors in their countries. So, they have a lot of skills and interest in food,” says Tran.

One future project is a planned partnership with Lady Flower Gardens, a non-profit organization that produces food for the city’s vulnerable populations including clients of MCHB. The co-operative would like to explore opportunities related to food production,

“We’re looking at the production of food and food agriculture as well as social enterprises. A lot of our families are farmers or previously had micro-enterprises, either food stalls or vendors in their countries. So, they have a lot of skills and interest in food.”

– Julia Tran





potential employment training and community capacity-building.

Kelly Mills of Lady Flower Gardens vouches for how being involved with food production can improve lives in a way that goes beyond access to the food itself.

For people who have always been on the receiving end of help, contributing to the process can improve self-esteem and give them a sense of altruism, she says. “Alberta Health Services, one of our groups, has done a lot of research in the last four years and

proven that their mental health is increasing from being a part of our projects,” says Mills.

While the primary purpose of Grocery Run is to provide food security, it also serves as a starting point to a conversation that leads to other quality of life improvements. Families, who are referred to the program by brokers, faith leaders or physicians in the community, first have their basic food needs met. Then each family is connected with a broker from their own ethnocultural community who shares their language and often has a deep understanding of their reality.

As one of those brokers, Libab speaks with families about what they need, whether it's childcare support, securing a place to live or pursuing education. She knows the questions to ask and what supports are most needed as she remembers the pain of being in their position.

“We give them some food but it's not enough. The big thing is, we give them hope. Even if it is not enough, we keep helping them,” says Libab. ■



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– Yodit Libab

Vital Topic

MILLENNIALS & TECHNOLOGY

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.

Who are the MILLENNIALS?

Alpha Generation

The youngest generation, born 2011 to present.

iGEN (Gen Z)

Post millennials, born between 1997 & 2010.

Millennial (Gen Y)

Born between 1981 & 1996.

GENERATION X (Gen X)

Born between 1965 & 1980.

BABY BOOMER (Boomers)

Born between 1946 & 1964.

The SILENT Generation

Born in 1945 or earlier.

For the purposes of this document these terms are defined as:

DIGITAL NATIVE describes a person who has grown up in the digital age.

DIGITAL IMMIGRANT having acquired familiarity with digital systems as an adult.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DIGITAL NATIVE

- Millennials learned about the world through computers – Google searches instead of encyclopedias, and email instead of Canada Post.
- Millennial children could surf the internet and its wealth of information all on their own but were only a phone call away from parents.

There's an App for that

According to Statistics Canada (2016), **94% of 15- to 34-year-olds own a Smartphone.** 76% of all Canadians own one.

The top three most popular types of apps:

- Social Networking (69%)
- Messaging (55%)
- Games (42%)

According to the 2017 Mobile App Report, millennials are:

- 3X more likely to be excited about new apps than are older users.
- likely to make an in-app purchase (70% compared to 21% for ages 55+).
- 76% more likely to say their phone is 'useless' without apps.

Social Media

Millennials were the first generation to embrace social media.

- In 2018, **91% of Canadian millennials** had at least one social media account – almost all millennials spend time on social media daily.

WHERE WE SPEND OUR TIME:

millennials	Gen X	baby boomers
Facebook (89%)	Facebook (75%)	Facebook (72%)
Instagram (65%)	LinkedIn (51%)	Google Plus (36%)
Snapchat (55%)	Google Plus (43%)	LinkedIn (32%)

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS are people who have built reputations based on their expertise on a particular topic and who can influence followers to buy products or services by promoting or recommending them on their social media channel(s).

- This is a recognized occupation by Revenue Canada.
- They now surpass friends and family as the primary source of fashion recommendations.

MILLENNIAL SIDE HUSTLES

Millennials who believe these internet jobs can make them extra income:

- 64% YouTuber**
- 56% Food Influencer on Instagram**
- 54% Fashion Influencer on Instagram**
- 51% E-sports gamer**
- 47% Cryptocurrency investor**

Getting the job done

Millennials think nothing of using technology to work from anywhere and the work doesn't necessarily shut down at 5 p.m. This work-life balance provides them the flexibility to take care of their families while still getting work done.

Video Games & E-sports

In 2017 Video games contributed:

\$3.7 billion to Canada's GDP and **40,600** direct and indirect full-time jobs.

- 71% of millennial parents played video games with their children.
- More than 80% of those aged 18-38 play video games.
- Canadian gamers spend an average of 52 hours gaming each month.

E-SPORTS

E-sports are digital competitions between players of electronic games on platforms including PC, Xbox, Playstation, etc.

- In 2016 Toronto hosted the North American Spring Championships for League of Legends – 15,000 tickets were sold out in one day.
- In 2018 Vancouver hosted the world championship for Dota 2 with a prize of more than \$25 million USD.

Daily Life

SHOPPING

Millennials account for 33% of all online purchases in Canada (2019).

- 73% of millennials are likely to choose an online retailer based on ease of checkout.
- Nearly half are more likely to make a spontaneous purchase because their payment data is stored within an app or online.

ONLINE DATING

In 2019, 30% of those online dating were 25-34 years old. The next-highest age cohort are 35-44.

HEALTH CARE

According to a 2019 Canadian Medical Association study:

- Almost **60% of millennials** are more likely than boomers to input health data into a program like Google, Alexa, Fitbit, etc., that could monitor their health and report issues to their health-care provider.
- They are less likely to be concerned about who has access to it or if it could be used against them than are Canadians aged 55+.

FITNESS

Canadian millennials (36%) are more likely to incorporate digital into their fitness routines than are boomers (11%).

- In 2019, 1/3 of those using wearable technology (i.e. Fitbit) were 25-34 years of age.

MOBILE BANKING

- More than half of millennials are using, or plan to use, banking apps as their main banking method.
- 53% of millennials use cash fewer than 4X per month.
- 3 in 5 millennials have used their phone to deposit a cheque.

DINING

The use of an app (in 2019) to call a meal delivery service, make a reservation, or purchase a meal kit subscription was done by:

- **47% of Canadian millennials**
- 26% of Gen-Xers
- 14% of boomers

According to Restaurants Canada, (2019):

- Millennials and iGens have been responsible for 5 consecutive years of growth in food service.

71% of millennials order food or beverages from a restaurant at least once a week or more.

- Millennials prioritize restaurants with free Wi-Fi, online reservations, and social interaction.

Ups & Downs of Technology

Millennials are more likely than Gen-Xers were (at their age) to be concerned about the social and ethical implications of advancing technology.

WELL-BEING

- **49% felt anxious when separated from their mobile device.**
- 57% agree that technology helps them take better care of their physical and mental well-being.
- **72% agree it has improved their connection with family and friends.**

PRIVACY & SHARING OF INFORMATION

- More than half of millennials are **happy to trade data** for personalization – like curated playlists or recommendations.
 - Most millennials are willing to allow stores to hold their financial information for convenience.
- A 2018 Canadian Marketing Association reported that:
- 67% of millennials have **some concern** about their online privacy.
 - 39% of millennials say that, as long as data is not abused, **privacy is less of an issue** than it used to be.

ECF@Work A COVID-19 Rapid Relief Fund grant from ECF provided \$100,000 to the Mental Health Foundation for Text4Hope – an online tool that sends daily messages to help people identify and adjust the negative thoughts a pandemic might be expected to provoke.

- As of April 29, the app had 45,000 subscribers
- 36.4% were from Edmonton.
- Nearly half of subscribers are 25-44.

Millennials, COVID-19, & Technology

According to Abacus Data, increased internet use crosses all demographic, regional, and socio-economic groups during the pandemic.

- **41% of Canadians are spending 3 hours or more interacting with a screen.** Of those, 55% are aged 18-29.
- 1 in 5 home internet subscribers in Canada have upgraded their service during the pandemic. Those under the age of 45 were 2X more likely than were those over 45.

LESSONS FROM MILLENNIALS

Millennials, as digital natives, are uniquely positioned to adapt to online interactions like video meetings or delivery of household goods.

Millennials' strong preference to work from home could become the new norm.

Video calling technology has been useful for connecting with older people who cannot leave their homes or receive visitors.

Technology, that millennials inherently use, is bringing people together.

EQUALITY IN HEALTH

EMHC IS BUILDING UP HEALTHY CITIZENS ...
AND A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

By: Cory Schachtel

Brook Biggin remembers the first meeting of the Edmonton Men's Health Collective (EMHC), what feels like many years and more than a few grey hairs ago, in 2015. "It was in my living room, and I brought a 15-pack of PBR. It was a talented group of people, but none of us really knew what we were getting ourselves into," he says.

A few years earlier, Biggin was diagnosed with HIV, and began working with a local HIV organization. They did good work, but his own lived experience, as well as digging into the data of how queer men were disproportionately affected, told him that something specific for his community was needed. Mainstream allies are important, Biggin says, but "the work is most impactful when it is driven by the minority communities that are impacted the most."

Five years later, the collective is going strong, expanding and learning along the way (they now go by EMHC in recognition of those who need their services but don't identify as

men). And they've garnered more mainstream funds, from all three levels of government, private industry and Edmonton Community Foundation, which recently funded two different projects thanks to endowment funds set up by its generous donors.

The Health Empowerment Through Active Leadership (HEAL) program equips LGBTQ2S+ community members with important health knowledge, as well as research, advocacy and community health promotion skills. Participants then apply these skills through the development and delivery of their own community health projects, often addressing needs that mainstream organizations might overlook. "Somebody with a high school diploma will come away from the program with a practical skill set they can apply in their everyday life, and community," Biggin says.

The other project digs deeper within the broader LGBTQ2S+ community to better understand the needs, experiences and assets of marginalized groups, and enhance accessibility to services, volunteer opportunities

and leadership opportunities. "Two-spirit people, trans and non-binary community members, queer and trans people of colour, people who are deaf — the grant provided us with funds to be more intentional in helping a broader spectrum of community members, and to understand what more inclusive health services look like for them," Biggin adds.

It's an extension of the EMHC's origin story — to tailor health needs to specific, marginalized communities-within-the-community — and it gives Biggin an emotionally satisfying exit strategy in the next year or so. "Part of being a leader is knowing when it's time to make space for others," Biggin says. "The organization has afforded me, and others who were involved early on, chances to learn and grow. There are issues that need to be dealt with today that I don't believe I'm the right person to address. There are a lot of talented people within our community who can make a big difference but have not been given the opportunity to do so." ■



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This is our chance to give back to our community, for generations to come.

Zafira, Danisha, Hamida Bhaloo & Choco.



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