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Cover illustration by Serena Tang



Martin Garber-Conrad

Martin Garber-Conrad

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

AS WINTER SETS IN, it's disappointing that the COVID-19 pandemic is still with us. The last 19 months have been challenging for sure. Yet, as we look back, we can see how important strong leadership and sustainable planning have been.

In this issue, we hear from Francis Price, Q.C., vice-chair of Edmonton Opera. He talks about how the Opera's endowment funds at Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) act as a figurative ventilator, keeping the organization stable during the pandemic.

Eldon and Anne Foote are ECF donors with a passion for the arts. The Foote family has several endowments at ECF and one fund is designated to support visual artists through the Eldon + Anne Foote Visual Arts Prize. On page 6, we profile Sharon Rose Kootenay, one of seven artists featured in the Art Gallery of St. Albert's exhibit, *In Good Company*. This exhibit showcases artists' work being recognized by the Visual Arts Prize and runs until February 5, 2022.

Endowment funds enable ECF to support hundreds of charities every year. In most cases, this support comes in the form of grants.

However, we also sponsor several events annually, including the Edmonton Mennonite Centre's Rise Awards, where ECF is thrilled to support the Community Leadership Award category. On page 11 we profile Salam Seifeddine. She received the 2019 Community Leadership Award for her tireless work helping newcomer children succeed at John D. Bracco School in northeast Edmonton.

This year marked important milestones for many Edmonton charities. For example, the Terra Centre for Teen Parents turned 50 in 2021. On page 18, we explore the organization's history and how it has evolved from its humble beginnings serving single mothers into a pillar of support for parents of all kinds in Edmonton.

Founded a decade later, Rapid Fire Theatre (RFT) turned 40 this year. On page 14, we learn how RFT has kept Edmontonians laughing for four decades and has become one of the world's premier improvised comedy companies.

And in our cover story, we visit Sport Central as it celebrates 30 years of providing renewed sports equipment to low-income children.

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

Best wishes for the holiday season.



SERENA TANG

Serena is a Hong Kong-Canadian illustrator and is passionate about visual artwork to tell the stories of Edmontonians and their changing surroundings as the city evolves.

ABI AJIBOLA

Abi is a portrait photographer in the Greater Edmonton area, specializing in photographing children and families. She enjoys the opportunity photography affords her to show the beauty in everyday people and the bonds they share. In her spare time, you can find her catching up on the latest exciting docuseries on TV.



AGNIESZKA MATEJKO

Agnieszka is a freelance writer and artist whose practice focuses on youth as well as engaging communities in public art projects. Her murals and installations include *Word on the Street*, where poetry by inner-city residents was sandblasted onto sidewalks.



TOM NDEKEZI

Tom is a freelance writer from Edmonton, Alberta. His work has appeared in *Edify* magazine, *The Gateway* and *Hungry Zine*. He is currently attending law school in Victoria, BC.

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GATEWAY TO A MISSION

SHARON ROSE KOOTENAY
CREATES BEAUTIFUL
INDIGENOUS ART TO TEACH,
INSPIRE AND UPLIFT

BY AGNIESZKA MATEJKO

WHEN SHARON ROSE KOOTENAY began work on an outdoor installation commissioned in 2020 by The Works Art & Design Festival, she feared it would be the last piece of art she would ever make.

A self-taught Métis Cree Heritage artist with deep roots in traditional women's practices, Kootenay often worked with animal hides in enclosed spaces while meeting tight deadlines. "When you use commercial leather, the processes are very harsh; the manufacturers use formaldehyde, arsenic and all these terrible chemicals," she says. "My vocal cords shut down and I couldn't breathe."

Just as her health collapsed, grim news of the pandemic and racial tensions filled the airwaves. Far from being ground down, Kootenay was determined to channel her grief into something beautiful.

"If it was going to be my last piece, let it be meaningful," she said, and named the piece *Transformation: Promise and Wisdom*.

Working in collaboration with her former photography instructor, Jason Symington, they set out to design the Giant Gateway — an entranceway to The Works Festival grounds in Churchill Square — so it would comfort people in the darkest days of winter.

On the gateway's pink side, blossoms and vines rise up to the sky, reassuring us that things will get better. "It's an interpretation of the Creator's promise," says Kootenay. "The turning



“IF IT WAS GOING TO BE MY LAST PIECE, LET IT BE MEANINGFUL.” — SHARON ROSE KOOTENAY

of the seasons brings new life; it will bring happiness again.” On the blue side, vines reach down, evoking wisdom. “In Cree/Métis spiritual practices, we believe that grandfathers and grandmothers are always with us, they are departed spirits who watch over us,” says Kootenay. “During COVID, if people were upset, they should know that there is a presence that’s guiding them and they aren’t to worry.”

The original flowers, photographed and enlarged for the archway, were located just a few blocks away in another Works Festival show, entitled *Wildflowers: Métis Women of Fort Edmonton, 1785 – 1910*. It featured Kootenay’s beaded and meticulously crafted birch-bark baskets, women’s belts and other items inspired by handicrafts of





Kootenay's exquisitely handcrafted art
Photos supplied



eight Métis/Bois-Brûlé women who were essential to the early settlement of Fort Edmonton.

These works — among Kootenay's decades-long body of artwork that began as she was too poor to afford beautiful crafts — exemplify her commitment to Native women's art and ways of life both in her own work and also as a founding member of the Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta.

She creates heirlooms and ceremonial pieces, reviving crafts from the turn of the 20th century, a time Kootenay refers to as the "Renaissance period" of Métis and Cree beadwork. Some of them are inspired by the floral patterns of her Cree Métis grandmother, and the geometric designs are often influenced by her husband, Elder Camille Joseph Kootenay, in the style of his Stoney/Nakoda ancestors.

Kootenay's works are never merely decorative; each piece is like a thread that unravels layers of meaning. Her two Tipi Bags, *We Are Rising* —

#NoDAPL — Wet'Suwet'en Territory, for example, depict television sign-off screens, one featuring thunderbirds, which are an important Indigenous North American spiritual symbol reaching as far back as petroglyphs.

"[Thunderbirds] are transformational," says Kootenay. "They are the power and source of electricity in the lightning..." In the 1970s, as her rural television screen flickered, she imagined that thunderbirds were causing the disturbance. "They are playing in that force field," she explains. But thunderbirds are not to be toyed with. "They are very strong and you have to abide by them if you take the thunderbird path."

In Kootenay's worldview, even daily events can point to broader historical and spiritual truths. Soon after she and Symington were shortlisted for the 2021 Eldon & Anne Foote Visual Arts Prize, an award established with support from Edmonton Community



Foundation and in partnership with Edmonton Arts Council and CARFAC Alberta, Kootenay witnessed a black crow rising out of a robin's nest.

"It was a terrible sight," Kootenay says, but remembers that a few days later, the fledgling robin came running. "He starts pecking at my toes, then jumps on my back and is crawling on my head. How often does that happen? The robin was a confirmation to me that the promise that we have offered to others through our artwork, was also going to be bestowed upon me, that the dark time I experienced would come to a close, and my health and happiness would be restored," she recalls. "I felt that the little robin was giving me a message — a confirmation of hope, and the acknowledgment of a mission fulfilled." ■



“EVERYBODY HERE HAS A COMMON BELIEF IN THE POWER OF SPORT TO BUILD BETTER PEOPLE.”

— SHELDON OLEKSYN

THE STUFF OF DREAMS

FOR 30 YEARS, SPORTS CENTRAL HAS BEEN SUPPLYING SPORTS EQUIPMENT TO UNDERSERVED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

BY TOM MURRAY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERENA TANG

DO YOU HAVE WARM MEMORIES of playing a team sport or games with friends at a young age? What if you couldn't afford the sports equipment necessary to enable your child(ren) to play on a team? For most of us, even used equipment would be appreciated.

“Very little was thrown away back then,” says Sport Central's executive director, Sheldon Oleksyn, who began working at the sports equipment-focused organization seven years ago. “We just didn't have any money.

Everything we received was used as much as possible, so we did a lot of repairs.”

To this day, Sports Central continues that tradition of fixing and repairing, keeping an area in the back of their main warehouse for a number of industrial sewing machines. The group patches gloves and goalie pads, goalie bags and more in their quest to refurbish and redistribute sports equipment to disadvantaged children. Formed in 1991, the volunteer organization has put new and used gear into the hands of more than 180,000 low-income kids.

“Everybody here has a common belief in the power of sport to build better people,” Oleksyn says. “We all have that personal experience and can tell stories about the discipline and commitment that can be gained by applying yourselves. I always say to my own boys that one of the greatest lessons sport can teach is how to lose well. In sport you lose as much as you win, and when it comes to being resilient that's an important lesson to learn.”

The genesis of Sports Central can be traced to Highlands Sporting Goods, an equipment shop managed by Bob Sangster. When it was converted to a charity, Sangster



ahead of the curve with Sports Central, naming Stettler's Gear Up and Peace River's Pawatum Program and the Calgary Flames Sports Bank as three of the few sister programs he can name. Now other cities are coming to Oleksyn and Sports Central for advice on how to set up their own.

"We're in discussions with a group who have asked to use our name and become Sports Central Saskatchewan. They want the logo, the brand, and access to our best practices and templates, all the things that we've established over 30 years," Oleksyn says. "We've given them permission and now I think it's just a matter of time before Winnipeg, Regina, maybe Vancouver will also follow. And it's really amazing because we're not franchising, we're not selling anything, we're just trying to help kids as best we can so none are left behind." ■

stayed on for a few years with the initial crew of volunteers, and the building was finally purchased with the help of many donors and fundraisers. Now, with a separate warehouse and 30 drop-off locations around the city, Sports Central is able to help more than just Edmonton kids with their sports equipment needs.

"Our warehouse bike shop has over 3,000 bikes go through it every year," notes Oleksyn, who says that pre-pandemic they were helping as many as 10,000 kids a year in all sports. "We give out maybe 2,500 of the bikes we receive. There are probably 500 to 700 bikes that we'll send to India, Africa, places like that, older-style bikes that are still good, but not something that local kids would readily accept or be proud to ride to school with."

In a sense, their bike operation indicates a future path for the charity. As Oleksyn points out, Edmonton is



"WE'RE JUST TRYING TO HELP KIDS AS BEST WE CAN SO NONE ARE LEFT BEHIND."

— SHELDON OLEKSYN

Foundations and the Pandemic – We Can Still Breathe!

BY FRANCIS PRICE, Q.C., VICE CHAIR AND ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR OF EDMONTON OPERA

IN THESE TWO YEARS of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the important medical devices has been the ventilator. It's a vital part of the fight against COVID.

In a similar way, Edmonton Opera has found its Opera Endowment Fund at Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) to be an important factor in the fight to keep the company alive and well. Our endowment fund is helping us to breathe as we continue to fight our way through these COVID times.

Breathing isn't the only important factor in a company's ability to stay alive, but it gives us more strength to work our way through COVID and into what will be, in many ways, a world changed forever — in life and in the arts.

In the 1980s, John and Barbara Poole, two of the great visionaries of our community, started something magical. Their magic powers matched their generous nature and allowed them to look into the future. There, they saw the success of endowment funds for non-profit professional arts organizations, like Edmonton Opera.

They knew these funds would provide the professional arts organizations greater stability, and allow confident planning and artistic flexibility — for decades and centuries into the future. So, our magical visionaries co-founded ECF by establishing endowments. Their vision was expanded by a federal fund from Canada Culture (now Canadian Heritage), which matches donation dollars each year to help grow endowment funds of numerous professional arts organizations, including Edmonton Opera.



Edmonton Opera's capital endowment fund gives a greater capacity to operate and realize its art by supporting long-term sustainability. Donations made to the endowment fund are designated as restricted capital to be held permanently and provide extra annual income for the Opera, long-term. This extra funding gives Edmonton Opera a springboard from which to launch world-class productions that would otherwise be beyond our reach.

Edmonton Opera's endowment funds are held and invested by ECF. Income from ECF's investments is distributed annually for working capital. Currently, ECF disburses four per cent of the capital each year to the Opera. The balance of the annual return on ECF's investment is added to the capital itself as inflation protection and capital growth.

Edmonton Opera has a general endowment fund at ECF as well as a growing number of named funds all under one umbrella. Over the years, Edmonton Opera has welcomed more generous visionaries, led by Dianne and Irving Kipnes, Bill and Paulette Winter, and Jim and Sharon Brown. Edmonton Opera welcomes a growing number of family and memorial funds, as well as returning and new donors, who join us each year to show their belief in the future of Opera and add their support.

Thank you to all our donors over the last 30 years and to ECF for your saving help now, as we excitedly prepare for our return to sharing Opera with our friends, patrons, artists, chorus, workers and community ... in our new world. ■

Above: Edmonton Opera's *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2020
Photos by Nanc Price (supplied)

Left: Company of Edmonton Opera's *La Traviata*, 2018
Photo by Nanc Price (supplied)





Building the Village to Raise the Child

THE RISE AWARDS RECOGNIZE PEOPLE
FOCUSED ON LIFTING UP THEIR COMMUNITIES >

BY LISA CATTERALL

Throughout her career, Salam Seifeddine has helped children of all ages embrace education and discover a love of learning. Over the past 25 years, she's worked in classrooms around the world, from teaching kindergarten in Lebanon to her current role supporting junior high students at John D. Bracco School in northeast Edmonton. As each year passes and each class moves on, she's come to understand and appreciate the importance of teamwork in ensuring each student's success.

"A classroom is a small community, really. Everyone is important, and everyone has a role to play," she says. "When we're talking about our newcomers' kids education, there should of course be a collaboration between teachers and students, but also with administrators, families and parents."

As part of her role as an educational assistant with John D. Bracco's English Language Learners (ELL) Transition Program, Seifeddine is part of a team that works to help children whose first language is not English prepare to enter regular classroom studies.

"I think it's important we involve their parents, because they are the ones who know their kids best. We need to hear their voices in this process," she says. "No parent should be left in the dark. They should not feel lost when it comes to their kids' education."

Seifeddine, who is bilingual in English and Arabic, works within the program to offer additional support to Arabic-speaking parents and families. She's well-acquainted with the challenges and opportunities these families encounter every day, and strives to make their lives easier in whatever way she can.



“NO PARENT SHOULD BE LEFT IN THE DARK. THEY SHOULD NOT FEEL LOST WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR KIDS’ EDUCATION.”

— SALAM SEIFEDDINE

"In Canada, newcomer parents have a different role when it comes to their kids' education than they did back home. At home, they help. They teach their kids, help with homework. Here, sometimes the kids are the ones who are helping the parents with translating at appointments or with forms," she says. "It's not easy parenting in two cultures. If we facilitate the school system for them, we are helping and doing our part."

With class sizes in the program often topping 30 students or more, Seifeddine and the teachers she works with often have their hands full. The students each bring their own unique experiences and perspectives to the classroom — some have had no formal education, while others have experienced delays or gaps in theirs. Many have experienced trauma. No matter their experiences, the ELL team works to meet kids where they are, offering personalized support and engagement activities.

"The needs we see are wide and diverse. You're working with sometimes four different levels of English — and everyone is learning the strategies and concepts at their own level and in their own way," she says. "So the more bodies in the classroom, the more adults we have there, the better."



Fortunately, volunteers from organizations including the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) bolster support in the ELL classroom through other language and educational supports. For more than 40 years, EMCN has supported such programs throughout the Edmonton region, helping newcomer and immigrant families adjust to and fully participate in Canadian society. Whether through language classes, employment resources or mental-health supports, EMCN strives to make Edmonton a more welcoming and inclusive place for individuals and families of all backgrounds to call home.

Since 2003, EMCN has honoured individuals and organizations in Edmonton who support their mandate through the annual RISE Awards. Each year, the awards recognize recipients in six categories who are working to help immigrants and newcomers build their lives in Edmonton. In 2019, Seifeddine was recognized with a Community Leadership Award for her passion and commitment to inclusive education for newcomer families.

“My heart and soul goes into helping newcomers. I have great faith in them — in their strength, in their talents, in their resilience,” she says. “When we’re working with them, we get to help them feel safe and loved, helping them to make friends

and get to know their communities. We’re able to see past the broken English to see that these kids are going to be our heroes.”

Although the RISE Awards took a hiatus in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, they awarded recipients in October 2021. This year, Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) was proud to sponsor the Community Leadership Award, recognizing individuals like Seifeddine for their work in making Edmonton a more welcoming and inclusive community.

“We are moved by the incredible work of so many Edmontonians like Salam,” says Nneka Ootogbolu, ECF’s director of communications and equity strategy. “The Community Leadership Award is a way for us to help recognize these champions who are strengthening our community every day.”

As she prepared to head into another school year at John D. Bracco, Seifeddine felt confident about what lay ahead. Although she already touched the lives of hundreds of students and families in Edmonton, she doesn’t plan to slow down anytime soon.

“This has become a way of life for me — it’s not simply a job I go to. These kids have changed my life — I hope I’ve changed theirs,” she says.

“Even if it’s only a little difference, I’ll be happy if I had an impact.” ■



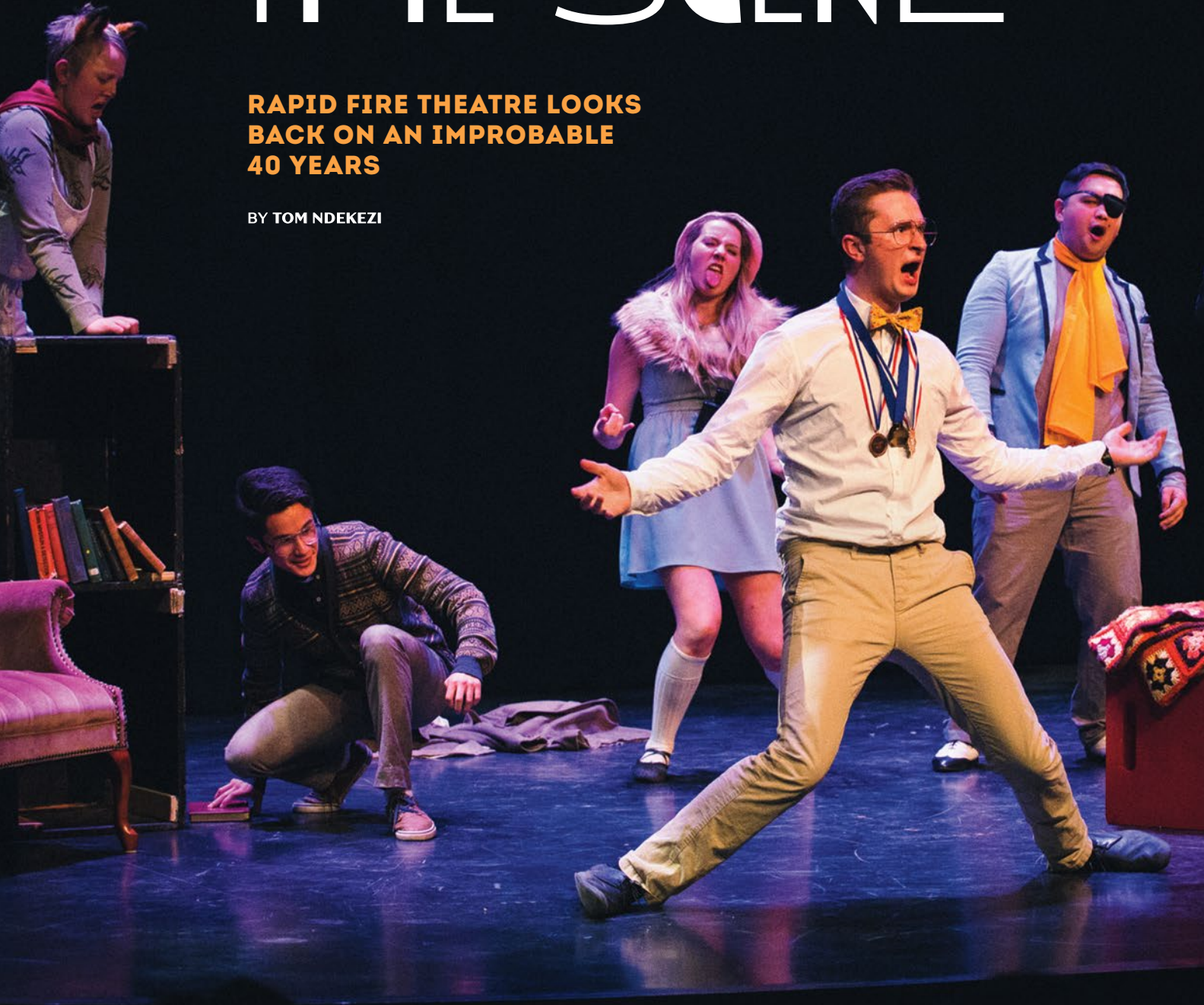
“WE’RE ABLE TO SEE PAST THE BROKEN ENGLISH TO SEE THAT THESE KIDS ARE GOING TO BE OUR HEROES.”

— SALAM SEIFEDDINE

EXTENDING THE SCENE

**RAPID FIRE THEATRE LOOKS
BACK ON AN IMPROBABLE
40 YEARS**

BY TOM NDEKEZI



“IN EDMONTON,
IT'S ABOUT DOING
A GOOD SHOW
BECAUSE WE'RE HERE
AND IT'S COLD OUT
AND WE WANT TO DO
A GOOD SHOW.”

— PAUL BLINOV



Improvised Wes Anderson at the Bonfire Festival
Photo by Billy Wong (supplied)

THE

THE NAME THEATRESPORTS seems like a bit of an oxymoron at first glance. Thanks to about three decades of theatre kids and jocks sneering at each other from either side of B-movie split screens, the thought of those two worlds coming together in an unhyphenated collision seems improbable, if not outright improper. But for British-born playwright and Canadian improv legend Keith Johnstone, the distance between those seemingly disparate worlds was always more conceptual than anything else.

“Professional wrestling was the only working-class Theatre that I’d ever seen,” Johnstone writes in his 1999 book *Impro for Storytellers*. Despite being a theatre tradition once geared toward nobles and groundlings alike, British theatre in the 1960s was defined by censorship from the Royal Household. For a young Johnstone, that meant his hope of injecting the theatre with the manic energy he witnessed while watching pro wrestling wasn’t just a distant reality — it was practically illegal. Johnstone instead took his dream with him to Canada, accepting a teaching position at the University of Calgary. It was there that he developed Theatresports while instructing at the famous Loose Moose Theatre (which he also helped co-found), melding timed formats, team competition and the unpredictability of a Royal Rumble into a distinctly un-British approach to improv. Johnstone’s innovation also turned out to be incredibly popular, and within a few years, Theatresports had found its way into theatre companies, improv troupes and drama classes around the world, including one particular theatre company right here in Edmonton.

LIVE FROM EDMONTON

In many ways, Edmonton in 1981 was the perfect place to start an improv troupe. With the Oilers still a few years away from an era-defining Stanley Cup run that would consume the city’s collective consciousness, Edmontonians’ curiosity and attention were still up for grabs. Edmonton also was, and still is, unique among Canadian metropolises for its long, dark, and cold winters; conditions that disqualified it from becoming a bona fide movie town, but ideal for producing performers ready to embrace Johnstone’s full-throated approach to improv.

“It’s not Toronto or Vancouver, where there’s a huge film and television scene and everyone’s hoping to get scouted and move on to the next thing,” says Paul Blinov, Associate Director of Education (Youth) at Rapid Fire Theatre. “In Edmonton, it’s about doing a good show because we’re here and it’s cold out and we want to do a good show.”

Blunt, practical and uniquely Edmontonian, that mindset helped launch Rapid Fire Theatre and grow it from an offshoot of the Theatre Network in 1981 to its own theatre company by 1988. The company relocated from the Phoenix Theatre two years later in search of a larger space, eventually finding itself at the Chinook Theatre, later renamed the Varscona Theatre. >



← The Coven at the Bonfire Festival
Photo by Billy Wong (supplied)

Rapid Fire would spend more than 20 years at the Varscona, during which the company straddled the line between a local hangout and a training ground for globally recognized performers including *Mass Effect* voice actor Mark Meer and silver screen heart-throb Nathan Fillion.

“That was sort of its own era,” Blinov says, reflecting on Rapid Fire’s stay in Old Strathcona. “There would be lineups down the street every Friday, even in the winter.”

Rapid Fire’s growth at the Varscona wasn’t just vertical, but horizontal, too. Although the company was still committed to the quick, rapid-fire storytelling it had become synonymous with, international influences and local demand pushed it to expand into sketch comedy and even scripted work. Rapid Fire also established regular showcases and festivals like Bonfire, CHiMPROV and Improvaganza, all while displaying an adaptability that Blinov credits with the company’s uncharacteristically long lifespan.

“The ensemble is this slowly changing group of people that’s changed drastically over the years, but I think at its heart, it’s about all of us trying to take care of each other and celebrate each other and empower each other’s ideas.”

TEACHING FROM THE STAGE

After more than two decades at Varscona, Rapid Fire moved from its home in Old Strathcona to a dedicated space at the Citadel Theatre in 2012. The company’s audiences and programming had once again outgrown its performance space, but more importantly, so had its impact on the city’s arts scene.

“Some of my favourite artists will tend to be improvisers, and sometimes they’re people that I don’t even realize have connections to Rapid Fire,” says Jana O’Connor, an Edmonton-based writer and author who was a cast member at Rapid Fire in the early ’90s and 2000s. “That’s a legacy that [Rapid Fire] has offered Edmonton for so many years. It’s just developed all of these really amazing and diverse artists who have gone beyond Edmonton’s borders, and then equally, people who’ve stayed here and continue to teach and perform.”

O’Connor counts herself in both camps, having performed in Europe with Rapid Fire before launching a career as a screenwriter and playwright. Her connections to Rapid Fire helped her land spots on sketch comedy shows like *CAUTION: May Contain Nuts* and *The Irrelevant Show*, but speaking to O’Connor,

she remarks on how the talents she honed as an improv player manifest themselves just about everywhere.

“I always talk about how I have no qualms about going into a job interview, because whatever they ask me, I’ll just come up with something,” she laughs.

The importance of creating an environment for performers and civilians alike to improvise was also echoed by Matt Schuurman, Rapid Fire’s current artistic director and the latest flag-bearer of the company’s workshop-based outreach strategy. “Education is a huge component to our company,” says Schuurman, who first got involved with Rapid Fire in 2001 during the annual Nosebowl High School Theatresports Tournament before joining as a company member in 2008. “One of the things we often say is that improv skills are life skills. The golden rule of improv is ‘Yes, and...’ So that kind of positivity, that creativity, that acceptance and listening are all great skills to bring into other elements of your life.”

With the cardinal rule of improv being centred on cooperation, it’s no surprise that collaboration has been a constant theme throughout Rapid Fire’s 40-year history. Whether that meant cast members fundraising for the Roxy after the theatre’s 2015 fire, partnering with the Citadel to introduce new generations to improv, or working with Edmonton Community Foundation to showcase women, trans and non-binary performers, Rapid Fire hasn’t stopped looking for ways to extend the scene.

“When that happens in a creative enterprise, it’s intriguing, and it’s fun, and you want to be a part of it, whether you’re on stage or you’re in the audience,” Blinov says. “Because it’s not the money, I’ll tell you that much. I think it’s because people genuinely onstage are having a good time and the audience senses that.” ■

To celebrate its 40th anniversary, Rapid Fire Theatre received support from Edmonton Community Foundation to publish a new book featuring interviews with current and former cast members and collaborators. The book is titled *We Made It All Up* and will be available Spring 2022.

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RAISING HOPE

THE TERRA CENTRE FOR TEEN PARENTS CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF HELPING YOUNG PARENTS THRIVE

BY AUBRIANNA SNOW

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ABI AJIBOLA

IT ALL STARTED IN 1971 with a group of young moms who wanted to finish high school while keeping their children. The Terra Centre for Teen Parents has evolved significantly since then, including developing programming for young fathers and expanding support for secure housing. Most recently, the organization purchased a new building to call home.

Barb Hoff-Morin accessed Terra services in 1973, after she gave birth to her son during her final year of high school.

“I was not invited to go back to school,” she explains. “In fact, I was asked to leave school, so I didn’t have any other alternatives ... It was great to be able to go there [Terra] and to be able to work on those things [academics]. It was also good to be involved with people who were non-judgmental, and also with other girls in the same circumstances.”

The idea of finishing an education while also being a young parent was a somewhat radical idea when Terra was created. “It was a difficult time to keep their children,” explains executive director Karen Mottershead. “Very often, they were strongly encouraged to surrender them and give them up for adoption.”


Back when Hoff-Morin joined, Terra was run out of an old house behind the LeMarchand Mansion. When Mottershead joined Terra in 1997, it was just moving into its

current location on 106 Street, where it serves young parents from all corners of the city. It will leave this location in January 2022 to transition into a building that can better serve young families. The new building will include a learning lab for parents seeking alternatives to complete their high school education and engage in employment readiness.

“Childcare and finishing high school have always been core to our mission,” Mottershead says. “That has never changed over the last 50 years. It looks different now that there’s a very robust educational program at Braemar School ... Over the years, we’ve really come to recognize that, for young parents and their children to be strong and healthy and successful, there are other supports that are needed.”

In addition to support for young fathers and housing assistance, Terra recently expanded to providing mental-health support and aid for Terra participants and alumni who move on to post-secondary programs.

“Everybody has curveballs that are thrown at them in life — things that we don’t expect,” says Mottershead. “And that doesn’t mean you’re any less of a person or a bad person, but it’s how you rise up to those challenges. And I think Terra provides a way for >



"I WAS NOT INVITED
TO GO BACK TO
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I WAS ASKED TO
LEAVE SCHOOL,
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ANY OTHER
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— BARB HOFF-MORIN

“I REALIZE THAT
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— BARB HOFF-MORIN



young parents going through an unplanned pregnancy to rise up to those challenges and embrace it in a way that works for them.” Hoff-Morin has been volunteering with Terra for many years. The experience of young parents, and prevailing attitudes towards them, haven’t changed much, she reflects. “My feelings roll back in time when I’m with them [the young parents], because I realize that they’re experiencing the same feelings, the same emotions, the same things, that I felt when I was a young mom... you don’t feel adequate.”

The taboo around teen pregnancy isn’t helping anyone, Hoff-Morin says. “There are some people who are critical

of these incidences that would help any other stranger or any other person through almost anything else, but they find it difficult to help a young woman that’s going to have a child and isn’t married, and maybe, in their minds, is too young to do that,” she says.

A key part of Terra’s work is to build the confidence of young parents. Many Terra alumni have gone on to be successful in post-secondary studies, own their own businesses and make their communities brighter places in a number of ways.

“I felt lucky with my life,” said Hoff-Morin. “I just hope that everyone that has an expectation of where they want to be in their life is able to do that.” ■

For 50 years, Terra has been helping young parents in Edmonton complete their high school education and transition into adulthood, all while focusing on the healthy upbringings of their children. Since 1992, Edmonton Community Foundation has provided Terra Centre with over \$2.8 million in grant funding.

The effects of Intersectionality on MAKING ENDS MEET in Edmonton

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

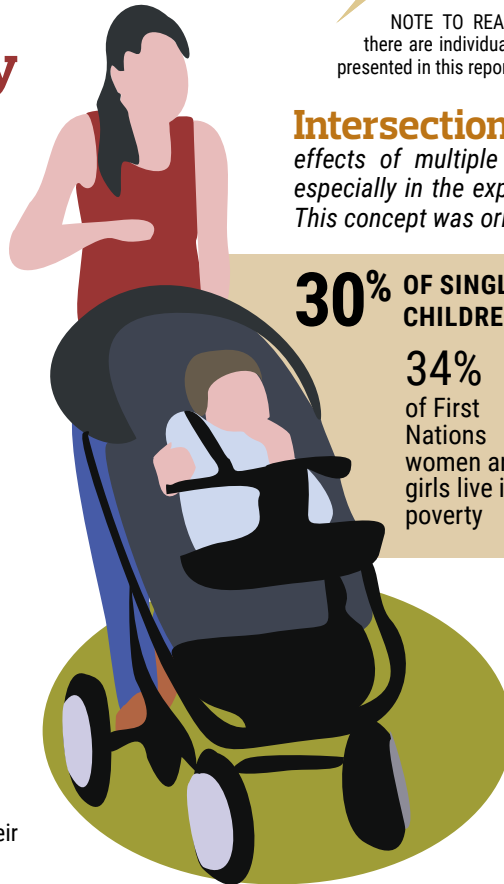
Unless otherwise stated, "Edmonton" refers to Census Metropolitan Area and not solely the City of Edmonton.

NOTE TO READERS: Due to limitations in the data available, we recognize there are individuals and perspectives that have not been represented in the data presented in this report.

Women & Poverty in Canada

More than 1.5 million women in Canada live in poverty.

Women face gender discrimination and may also experience barriers related to race, gender identity, ability, or age that hinder their earning potential. Women of all intersectionalities are over-represented in low-wage, precarious work.



Intersectionality is the cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination overlap or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. This concept was originally introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw.

30% OF SINGLE MOTHERS ARE RAISING THEIR CHILDREN IN POVERTY

34%
of First Nations women and girls live in poverty

21%
of visible minority women and girls live in poverty

23%
of women with disabilities live in poverty

16%
of senior women live in poverty

Income Gap

In Edmonton (2019), female tax-filers earned about \$0.71 for every dollar men made.

Why the Pay Gap Persists

- Higher-paying industries are still largely 'male-dominated' occupations.
- Women spend more time than men do on unpaid domestic labour, and often reduce their labour force participation, putting them at a disadvantage in the labour market.
- 25.1% of working women work part-time in Edmonton (10.8% men).
- Woman-dominated jobs tend to be underpaid, even when they involve the same level of skill as man-dominated jobs.

Education

According to the 2016 census, more women hold college diplomas or higher than men do in Edmonton (61.9% vs 47.4% for men).

- Men have higher rates of apprenticeships or trades certificate of diploma (17.7% compared to 4% of women).

Systemic Discrimination

According to the Alberta Human Rights Commission, in 2019-2020, the top 5 areas of complaints received were:

30% Physical Disability	14% Gender
22% Mental Disability	8% Race/colour
	7% Ancestry/origin

77% of discrimination complaints were about employment practices.

Violence Affects Income

Domestic Violence

- 80% percent of people who experience domestic violence report that their work performance was negatively affected.
- **Indigenous women, women with disabilities, and LGBTQ2S+ respondents were more likely to have experienced intimate-partner violence.**

Of those who indicated that they had experienced intimate-partner violence:

- More than 50% said the violence continued at the workplace (calling or showing up at the workplace, etc.)
- 60% called in sick due to violence.
- 38% reported it affected their ability to get to work.
- 8.5% lost their jobs due to violence.



Sexual Assault and Discrimination in the Workplace

- 10% of women experience gender discrimination in the workplace (4% of men).

Discrimination is an action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons such as their race, age, or disability. It may be intentional or unintentional.

Harassment is a form of discrimination. It includes any unwanted physical or verbal behaviour that offends or humiliates you.

LGBTQ2S+

In Canada (2018):

- 4% of the population aged 15 and older are LGBTQ2S+.
- 24% of the LGBTQ2S+ population was enrolled in post-secondary education, compared to 13% of the non-LGBTQ2S+ population.

33% of LGBTQ2S+ Canadians found it difficult to meet their needs (transportation, housing, food, clothing) compared to 27% of non-LGBTQ2S+ Canadians.

Workplace Sexual Harassment

Non-heterosexual people experience inappropriate sexualized behaviour in the workplace more often than their heterosexual colleagues.

- 59% of bisexual women reported being targeted (24% of heterosexual women).
- 32% of gay men were targeted.
- Many were told that they do not act like someone of their gender is supposed to act, were insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded in their workplace.

NEED WORK

Visible vs. Non-visible Minorities

In Edmonton (2016), there were 279,275 working-age visible minorities aged 15 and older.

This cohort:

- makes up 26.5% of the total working-age population.
- has a labour force participation rate of 72.8%.
- has an unemployment rate of 9.4% (8.1% for non-visible minorities).

Black Edmontonians had the highest unemployment rate at 13.9%.

- Visible minority Albertans had a higher level of education than Albertans as a whole.
 - 35.7% of visible minority males and 36.8% of visible minority female compared to 27.1% and 25% of all Albertans respectively.

Visible minority individuals in Alberta had lower proportions of apprenticeships and trades accreditation.

Underemployment

Nearly 850,000 Canadians are underemployed, more than 60% of whom are immigrants, because their credentials are not being fully recognized.

- 524,000 with international credentials.
- 200,000 with out-of-province credentials.
- 120,000 with experiential learning not recognized in a credential.

Employment Challenges

Racialized minorities and immigrants experience greater unemployment and underemployment collectively, but immigrant women are hit the hardest.

- **"Foreign-sounding names" are less likely to get a call-back for a job interview.**
- Racialized workers and immigrants often work in lower-paying occupations.
- **Racialized women represent only 6.4% of management, but 10.5% of the overall workforce.**
- Self-employment and entrepreneurship may provide increased socio-economic mobility.

Persons with Disabilities

6.2 million Canadians have a disability.

- Persons with disabilities have much lower employment rates (59.4%) compared to people without disabilities (80.1%).

People with Disabilities Have Lower Incomes

- Median after-tax income for women with severe disabilities was \$17,520 (2015), for women without disabilities – \$34,360.
- Women with disabilities are more likely to work part-time than are men with disabilities.
- Individuals 65+ with severe disabilities had higher incomes than those with disabilities of a working age, due to Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Visible Minorities with Disabilities

- 14.3% of persons with disabilities were also a member of a visible minority group.
- Visible minorities with disabilities aged 25 to 64 are twice as likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher (33.9%) than non-visible minorities with disabilities (17.3%).
- **One-third of employed visible minorities with a disability said that their work does not give them the opportunity to use all of their education, skills, or work experience.**

Workplace Sexual Assault and Discrimination

- Women with a disability are more likely to have experienced both inappropriate sexualized behaviours and gender based discrimination than are women without a disability.

WOMEN:

	with a disability	without a disability
Sexualized behaviours	35%	20%
Gender discrimination	16%	7%
Sexual assault	3%	1%

MEN with a disability were also at higher risk than men without a disability.

Senior Women

Poverty and economic insecurity are prevalent for senior women in Canada.

- Seniors' poverty rate was 15.4% in 2017.
- **Senior women make up roughly two-thirds (63%) of all seniors living in poverty.**
- Poverty is particularly prevalent in marginalized groups.
 - 24% of Indigenous women over 65 lived on low income in 2015.
 - 22.6% among older women who immigrated to Canada within the last 10 years.

Seniors' Savings

Senior white Canadians enjoy the greatest income security, and have the most diverse sources of income with an average annual income of \$42,800.

- **First Nations seniors have an average income of \$29,500.** Half of it coming from public pensions.
- **Racialized seniors' average income is \$29,200.** 40% coming from public pensions.

Indigenous Persons

5.39% of Edmonton's population are Indigenous.

Education

More Indigenous women hold a bachelor degree or above (9.4%) than Indigenous men (5.7%) in Alberta.

Indigenous People Living Off-Reserve in Alberta

In December 2019, there were 104,900 employed Indigenous people living off-reserve.

- 4.5% of Alberta's overall employment.
- Of those employed, 87,600 were employed full-time and 17,300 were part-time.
- **The unemployment rate in Alberta for Indigenous people living off-reserve was 13.2%. The overall rate was 7.3%.**

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