

SUMMER 2018

LEGACY ACTION

EDMONTON
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

ALL THEIR WORLD'S A STAGE

p8

Free Will Players
celebrate 30 seasons

A NICKEL AT A TIME

p12

The resourcefulness
of Gil Charest

YOUTHFUL PRIDE

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Festival provides
safe space for
younger population



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Martin Garber-Conrad

Martin Garber-Conrad
CEO

It's hard to believe that nearly a year has passed since Canada 150, an historic event Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) marked by funding a long list of community celebrations, including the High Level Lit (HLL) Project.

A collaboration between ECF and *Eighteen Bridges* magazine, HLL asked 13 writers from Edmonton — literary heavy hitters and rising stars — to reflect on the city in light of the country's 150th birthday. Contributors' stories were shared at a series of salons held throughout the year, and published in a special issue of *Eighteen Bridges*.

This spring, we were thrilled to learn that the issue won an award from the Alberta Magazine Publishers' Association (AMPA) for Best Editorial Package and Magazine of the Year. I'd like to offer my congratulations and appreciation to everyone who brought the issue to life, namely: *Eighteen Bridges*' editor Curtis Gillespie, LitFest director Fawnda Mithrush, ECF communications

staff, and the 13 writers who lent their literary talents to the project. Starting June 20, we will be publishing their essays online — a new one each day — in the days leading up to Canada's 151st birthday.

Of course, there are plenty of other things to celebrate in Edmonton this summer, like the 30th anniversary of the Freewill Shakespeare Festival. Thirty years ago a group of university students started our city's version Shakespeare in the park. Today more than 10,000 Edmontonians flock to the Heritage Amphitheatre every summer to watch the best of the Bard. You can read about their journey in our cover story on page 8.

This issue also features a story on Gil Charest, who created a fund at ECF in 1999 to help organizations offering peer support for people living with HIV (see p. 12). To date, Charest has raised \$41,000 for his fund — mainly by collecting bottles and selling copies of his cookbook — which has been gifted to the Living Positive for Positive Living Society and two other organizations.

June is also a time of celebration for Edmonton's diverse indigenous communities as National Indigenous Peoples Day (formerly National Aboriginal Day) falls on June 21 each year. As we travel the path toward reconciliation, we look at the story of papamihaw asiniy, or the Manitou Stone, and how the Royal Alberta Museum is creating a new accessible exhibit for the sacred object. (see article on p. 16).

Welcome to the Summer 2018 issue of *Legacy in Action*. Wishing you and yours a summer full of celebration and community.

– Martin Garber-Conrad

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HOW TO START A FUND

Donors work with Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) to ensure their investments are set up for long-term growth. Endowment funds offer permanent investment of charitable gifts to provide ongoing support to organizations in the Edmonton community.

When you're thinking about donating, it's important to first think about what you'd like to accomplish. Here are a few questions to get you started:

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MIDSUMMER NIGHTS' DREAMS

Edmonton's beloved Freewill Shakespeare Festival celebrates 30 seasons

BY: MICHAEL HINGSTON
PHOTOGRAPHY: RYAN PARKER PHOTOGRAPHY,
LUCAS BOUILIER AND ALEXA TONN



The Comedy of Errors performance, 1989

Looking back on 30 years of the Freewill Shakespeare Festival, one of the best-loved and longest-running festivals in Edmonton, it's tempting to look to the Bard himself for words appropriate to the occasion — after all, there's a William Shakespeare quote for everything. But as pithy as a line like, “What's past is prologue,” from *The Tempest*, may be, we're going to have to respectfully disagree in this case. Three decades of Shakespeare in the park, and all the ups and downs that come with it, is no small achievement. And it deserves to be celebrated.

What began, in 1989, as an off-the-cuff, pass-the-hat operation run by a ragtag group of recent grads of the University of Alberta theatre program has become a staple of the city's cultural scene, an

annual double bill of high-end theatre delivered in the casual open-air surroundings of Hawrelak Park. Combine those factors, and the experience is hard to beat. As current managing director Julie Haddow puts it, “Where else are you going to go to see a squirrel steal your popcorn and run across the stage?”

The festival's current path was in many ways decided by those early years, as the nascent Free Will Players dreamed up a run of clever and inventive reinterpretations of Shakespeare's texts. Early productions introduced football players to *Much Ado About Nothing*, neon Day-Glo paint splatter to *The Comedy of Errors*, and motorbikes — some of which crashed accidentally en route to the stage — to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Props and costumes were occasionally fished out of dumpsters.

“It was literally beg, borrow, or steal,” says Troy O’Donnell, a founding member of the company and current artistic associate. That energy and infectious kitchen-sink approach also helped solidify the festival’s mandate of creating works that are accessible to all audiences, regardless of education or income level.

Marianne Copithorne remembers the enthusiasm of those early performances, too — first from the point of view of an audience member, then as an actor and director. Since her onstage debut as Lady Macbeth in 1999, Copithorne has helmed countless shows (including this year’s production of *Hamlet*) and has served as the festival’s artistic director since 2009. Over that time, she’s seen the festival’s



As You Like It performance, 2001



EVEN IN THE WORST OF
CONDITIONS, THERE’S
STILL 100 PEOPLE
WAITING TO GET IN,
WITH THEIR UMBRELLAS

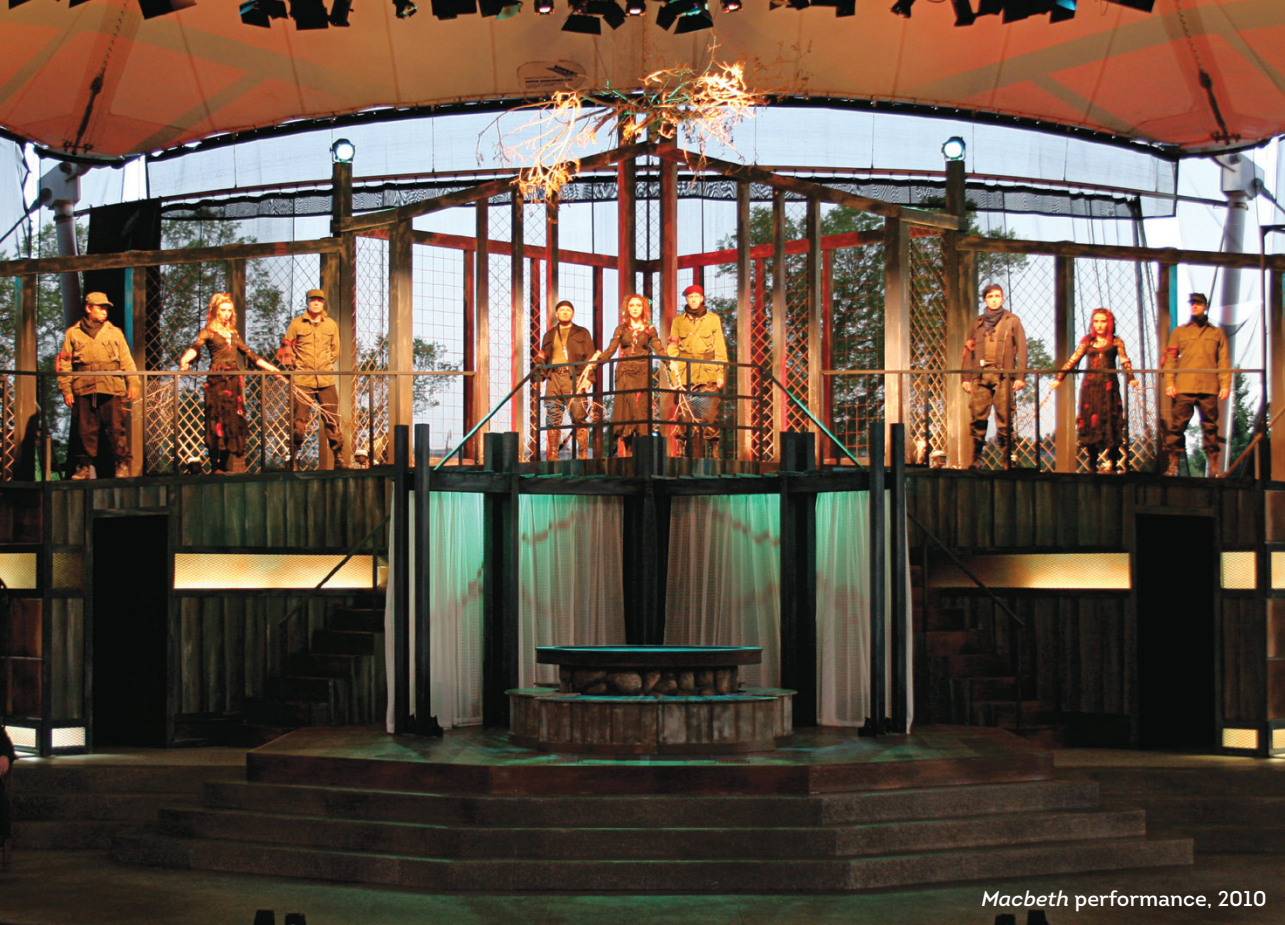


production values rise dramatically. The stage itself has been expanded, and cast members now wear microphones. The festival’s lights and sound equipment are much improved, too, thanks in part to a recent grant from Edmonton Community Foundation. But what hasn’t changed is the pleasantly frantic pace at which each show is put together: “Twelve eight-hour days of rehearsal, three days of tech, and then we’re into previews,” Copithorne says, so quickly that it feels like a mantra.

Then there’s the weather, the festival’s ultimate double-edged sword. On good days, the setting sun adds a layer of natural beauty that simply can’t be replicated in a traditional venue. But when it goes south — as it did in 2014, when strong winds tore a hole in the Heritage Amphitheatre’s canopy, forcing the festival to cancel the entire run of one show outright and move the other one indoors — the elements can feel downright vindictive. The 2014 season was no *Tempest* in a teacup: That year attendance plummeted >



Henry V performance, 2003



Macbeth performance, 2010



70 per cent, and struck a blow to the festival's status as a summer mainstay. Copithorne still admits to gluing herself to the Weather Network's radar screen as soon as it's time to move down to the park each spring. But she also knows that no matter how bad it gets outside, audiences, at least, will never let her down. "Edmontonians just seem to know: 'Well, either it'll clear up, or it won't. But we'll give it a go,'" she says. "Even in the worst of conditions, there's still 100 people waiting to get in, with their umbrellas. They've got their blankets and their supplies, and they're ready to roll." There's a reason the festival bills Mother Nature as "ambience director" in its programs, after all.

Unpredictable as it is, that push and pull of the natural environment is a key factor in the success of the festival over the years. On one hand, Copithorne says, it's a battle to keep viewers' attention aimed at the stage, when there are so many potential distractions in the background.

"We're constantly competing with motorbikes ripping around the park, and paddleboat announcements: 'Boat 29, your time is up,'" she says. At the same time, that idyllic outdoor location is what

differentiates Freewill from pretty much every other place you can watch live theatre in Edmonton. It's also frequently incorporated into the productions, with actors wandering in character through the background, setting up tents on the grass, and even sitting in empty seats before officially making their entrances. O'Donnell, meanwhile, estimates that 80 per cent of the people who recognize him on the street end up sharing a weather-related festival memory. "Those are the things that really make an impression on the audience," he says.

As its name implies, Freewill is a hybrid experience, part theatre and part festival — and it's the festival aspect that it's hoping to build on for the future.

"If you looked at our past marketing it featured a lot of pictures of the actors in amazing costumes on this amazing stage," Haddow says. "Unfortunately that doesn't really attract the people who aren't Shakespeare lovers, our new approach is to appeal to both Shakespeare fans and festival lovers."

Since coming on board in 2015, Haddow expanded the ancillary parts of the festival, adding more themed events like wine and beer tastings, date nights, and even puppet shows. She knows all Edmontonians will love the performances. So the question becomes how she can get them down to the park, and what else they can do once they're there.

Thirty years is a long time for anything, let alone an annual festival. But to quote the Bard again, this time from *Othello*: "Pleasure and action make the hours seem short." The Free Will Players would no doubt agree. ■



Freewill audience

LOOKING BACK

1989:

The Freewill Shakespeare Festival debuts.

1998:

A second production is added to the annual summer lineup.

1999:

The festival goes professional, paying actors and crew professional wages for the first time.

2012:

A year of incredibly bad luck: An actor in *The Tempest* has a death in the family; Marianne Copithorne, the director, suffers a burst appendix; artistic associate Annette Loissele gets in a bicycle accident and breaks her collarbone on the first day of rehearsal.

2014:

Strong winds tear the festival's canopy, forcing them to cancel one production outright and relocate the other to the indoor Myer Horowitz Theatre. Attendance falls nearly 70 per cent, from 13,832 the previous year to just 4,405.

2018:

The festival celebrates its 30th anniversary with new productions of *Hamlet* and *The Comedy of Errors*.

Afternoon tea, 2016





A PATCHWORK OF LIFE

Gil Charest's Living Quilt Fund in 20th year of helping those living with HIV



Birnie Smith begins sewing the Living Quilt, 1997





BY: FAWNDA MITHRUSH
PHOTOGRAPHY: BLUEFISH STUDIOS



On page one in the *More... Healthy Connections* cookbook, a quote nestles alongside recipes for Pearl's Nuts & Bolts and Crustless Mini Quiche.

It reads: *"Defeat isn't bitter if you don't swallow it."*

Refusing defeat through sheer practicality, it seems, is Gil Charest's specialty. The coil-bound kitchen tome is the second edition of Charest's self-published fundraising tool, containing recipes contributed by himself, family and friends. The instructions are short and sensible — none more than half a page long. Some include quips about a recipe's storied culinary origins and most are listed with ingredients common to pantries stocked prior to the Food Network era. *Tips for Fancy Party Sandwiches* and how-tos on microwave cooking are near the index.

The book emphasizes its author's no-nonsense approach to getting things done. It's how Charest built the Living Quilt Fund, which is about to enter its 20th year at Edmonton Community Foundation. When he established the fund, his efforts were focused on assisting people living with HIV and AIDS, even if it was a nickel at a time.

"It was political," Charest says. "HIV was a big LGBTQ issue, and at the time it was like pulling teeth to get any kind of funding out of the government. So, I thought, 'I've had enough of this. They're not going to fund it. I'm going to have to do it myself.'"

Since 1999, Charest has grown the fund, granted the majority of proceeds to the Living Positive for Positive Living Society, and — in tougher years when Living Positive was not operating — to the Pride Centre of Edmonton.

He started the fund with \$1,000 of his own, and by 2003 had raised the required \$10,000 for the fund to begin granting. The fund's current balance, now tipping \$41,000, has been raised through direct sales of Charest's two cookbooks, as well as a diligent habit of bottle-picking on daily walks in his Oliver neighbourhood.

During our interview at his home, he explains that he doesn't have anyone helping him per se, but folks who know his habits find ways to contribute. He points to a bag of bottles in the kitchen sink that his down-the-hall neighbours recently offered up.

"In the last year, I added just over \$2,000 into the fund that was mostly through the

collection of recycling." In the early days of the fund, friends held garage sales or would send a small cheque in the mail. "But, I would say 90 per cent has been recycling money, for the whole \$40,000. It's amazing. I go two-and-a-half blocks maybe once a day, and in that two-and-a-half blocks, people have thrown out over \$2,000 worth over the year. I don't get how people can be so wasteful, actually. It blows me away."

The Living Quilt Fund began in 1998 with an actual quilt. The constantly evolving textile hangs in the headquarters of Living Positive for most of the year, and Charest proudly manages the adding and tracking of names on the quilt each month. The three-panel quilt was created by Charest's friend Birnie Smith and was conceived in contrast to the trend of commemorating those who passed away in the early years of the pandemic.



AFTER SOME DAYS OF CONTEMPLATION, I CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF USING A QUILT, BUT TO TURN THE WHOLE IDEA UPSIDE DOWN



The reality in those years was that many living with HIV didn't even disclose their diagnosis until death did it for them — a tragedy epitomized by the AIDS Memorial Quilt, the personalized, handmade panels of which became emblematic of the advocacy movement that followed.

"I was going through a very dark period. I had lost more friends than anybody should have at my age," says Charest. One day, someone talked him into attending a workshop put on by the Hope Foundation, where participants were given homework to create a project that focused on hope. "After some days of contemplation, I came up with the idea of using a quilt, but to turn the whole idea upside down." As such, the idea of the Living Quilt was born.

"HIV is not the sentence it used to be," says Living Positive's Executive Director, Rolund Peters. "The quilt exemplifies what Living Positive is all about, not only for our society but for each individual living with HIV." >



The quilt on display has names of people who are HIV positive displayed with a number, reflecting the years they've survived with the diagnosis. The numbers on the quilt today go from one to 25+ years alongside 143 names.

“Now we are seeing our members living well into their senior years. With the quilt we are able to display to diagnosed individuals that their life is not over, but rather just changed. To see the mindset change in those individuals cannot be overstated. I cannot tell you how many people come into our office with tears in their eyes, but leave with cheer in their voice. This is the power of the Living Quilt,” Peters says.

Peters adds that the Living Quilt Fund has been essential and consistent, offering annual proceeds from the endowment to go into operations and services for members that other funding may not support.

Now granting more than \$2,000 a year, Charest says endowment funds offer a sustained way to support causes closest to one's heart and passion. It's not millions, but \$2,000 a year can mean a great deal to an organization like Living Positive. “It's kept the lights on,” says Charest, 71, who remains a dedicated member of the society's board of directors. “It's being

Recipe for Hawaiian Chili

Courtesy of Gil Charest

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 lb lean ground beef | 1 tsp prepared mustard |
| 1 medium onion, chopped | 3 tbsp brown sugar |
| 1 green pepper, chopped | 3 tbsp vinegar |
| 1 C mushrooms, sliced | 1 can pineapple tidbits |
| 2 cans prepared pork and beans | 1 tbsp chili powder |
| 1 C ketchup | salt and pepper to taste |

Saute onion and mushrooms in a little oil until softened. Add beef and brown. Pour mixture into a slow cooker and add remaining ingredients. Cook on low for 2 hrs and serve with buns. To bake in the oven, pour mixture into a casserole dish and bake at 350 F for 45 min. Perfect summer bbq side dish with a tropical flavour.

that basic, really. And for quite a few years, it's been a slog just keeping the place open for people to come in and access the resources.”

“I'm happy with what the fund is doing now. It's really tough when it's just small, but now it's kind of taken on a life of its own,” he says with a smile. “I'll probably still do some recycling, some collecting. But I'm retired now, I don't have the energy.”

His grin, cheekily, suggests otherwise. ■



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SPIRIT OF THE STONE

Storied journey of papamihaw asiniy continues

BY: WAYNE ARTHURSON

Centuries ago, a fireball streaked through the Alberta sky, crashing into the prairie overlooking Iron Creek in East Central Alberta.

The Plains Cree named the meteorite papamihaw asiniy – flying rock. Many noticed it was shaped like the head of a buffalo. Others saw a face in the rock and believed it was the Creator's. Over time, papamihaw asiniy became an object of great spiritual power. Cree and Blackfoot made pilgrimages to it before a buffalo hunt. The area around it became a gathering place for contemplation and ceremony.

According to Dr. Dwayne Donald, an associate professor at the University of Alberta, a descendant of the Papaschase Cree and an expert in the field of curriculum studies, rocks such as papamihaw asiniy are “significant and deeply spiritual” to Indigenous people on the prairie. They are natural landmarks for travel, but the Plains Cree also see them as animate objects “that have an energy to them that is forever in flux. This cyclic energy is what gives the rock its spiritual quality.”

The crash site has a spiritual quality, too. The rock landed where the lands of the Cree and Blackfoot intersected, contested in battles due to the prevalence of buffalo in the area. Many believed, Donald says, that the rock was a message “to remind the people that no one can own the land or the buffalo. These were meant to be held in common, openly and respectfully, shared by all.” It brought peace to the area and a prophecy

noted that if it was ever removed, war, pestilence and famine would follow.

Methodist missionary George McDougall felt the stone hampered his ability to convert Indigenous people to Christianity. So, in 1866, he stole it and moved it to his churchyard near Smoky Lake. It sat there for nearly 10 years before he donated it to his alma mater, Victoria Methodist College in Cobourg, Ontario.



The Manitou Stone

“The prophecy said there would be starvation, there was going to be disease, there was going to be warfare, that people were going to be imprisoned,” Donald says. “All of it came true.”

The buffalo left the area, and the Cree and the Blackfoot warred over dwindling resources. Europeans slaughtered buffalo by the millions, so there was famine. Newcomers brought smallpox and many Indigenous people died. And later, Indigenous children were taken from their families and housed in

the residential school system.

For almost a century, papamihaw asiniy remained in Victoria College, which became part of the University of Toronto. Studies determined the 145-kilogram rock was more than four billion years old.

It returned to Alberta in 1972, renamed the Manitou Stone, when the U of T “loaned” it to the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM). In 2002, the U of T transferred stewardship of the stone to RAM, says Chris Robinson, the executive director of the Royal Alberta Museum.

“I consider it a great privilege to have it here. It is a great sense of responsibility to not only care for it, but to make it accessible,” Robinson says.

“And if it can play a role in helping people better understand their own culture or a role in healing, I think those are perhaps new roles that museums are taking on nowadays.”

A special gallery to house the stone has been built in the newly constructed RAM in downtown Edmonton, which is expected to open this year.

“It’s in a gallery which is before the admissions desk, so nobody need even come in and present themselves to the admissions desk,” explains Robinson.

In the circular gallery, the stone will sit in the centre, on earth taken from its original location, surrounded by a 360-degree image of the original site.

“When you’re in that gallery, it gives a real sense of being on that landscape and how you could very easily see the significance of the stone and this site,” Robinson says. “It’s designed to be a very reverential,



The Manitou Stone is being housed in a special gallery in the lobby of the new Royal Alberta Museum

respectful, quiet space. People can go up. They can leave offerings there. They can perform ceremony there.”

Professor Donald was part of a committee of Indigenous people who advised the museum about how to house the stone in the new museum – and the discussion continues on where the stone should lie.

“Wouldn't it be better if we put it back where it was instead of trying to simulate where it came from?” Donald asks, likening the stone being in a museum to a wolf or grizzly being in a zoo. “I guess I'll put it this way: people who I admire and respect a lot think it needs to go back for things to get balanced again. I have no reason to question them.”

Robinson understands those feelings, admitting that even though the museum is considered a steward of the stone, it has held consultations over the years about it. And though the idea of repatriating the Manitou

Stone, or papamihaw asiniy, to Indigenous people has been brought forward, there hasn't been consensus on who exactly would take possession of it. So, it remains at the museum.

“

I CONSIDER IT A GREAT PRIVILEGE TO HAVE IT HERE. IT IS A GREAT SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY TO NOT ONLY CARE FOR IT, BUT TO MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

”

“And we've taken a couple of significant journeys in getting it here and getting it displayed and getting its stories told, but that's not the end,” Robinson says.

“It's really just a new beginning.” ■

PARTY WITH A PURPOSE

*Youth Zone plays important role
in Pride Festival's family-friendly
atmosphere*

BY: DAVID RYNING
ILLUSTRATION: TIERRA CONNOR

It's Edmonton's early-summer blast: a big, loud rainbow of fun and excitement. But it's more than just a party — it's a gathering dedicated to equality, inclusion and belonging.

That's Alyssa Demers's message about Edmonton's Pride Festival, the annual celebration of the city's vibrant LGBTQ community. The theme of this year's event, which runs June 8-17, is "Full Spectrum Pride," a phrase that mirrors the diversity of the festival-goers.

And nowhere does that theme resonate more than at the festival's Youth Zone, a place where younger attendees are welcomed into the celebration.

Demers (whose pronouns are "they and them") is a junior high school teacher, outdoor enthusiast and sometime drag king, with deep involvement in the Pride Festival. As co-chair of the Edmonton Pride Festival Society board and the former director of youth engagement, Demers finds particular meaning in the Youth Zone.

While supervising students on the playground on an unseasonably chilly spring day, Demers talked about the festival's efforts to expand its appeal across the diverse LGBTQ population.

"Our community is so many different folks," they said. "So many people from different walks of life: ages, race, class. We're really focusing on the intersectionality of our community."



This year marks the 38th edition of the festival. Dana Marsh, communications officer for the Festival Society, says the 2017 event saw wide participation.

“We had 50,000-plus parade attendees, 410 volunteers and 36 events,” Marsh says. “There were also 55 sponsors, 98 parade entries and 91 non-profits showcased.”

Over the years, the festival has expanded to incorporate the breadth and diversity of the community.

Demers said the Youth Zone came out of an awareness that the Pride Festival could do a better job of embracing different age ranges, particularly the younger population.

“In 2012 I was in high school, and Edmonton Pride had received some feedback that Pride was too adult-oriented,” Demers said. “So a small committee of youth and I decided to create the Youth Zone. The year after that, in 2013, I became part of the board and I was the director of youth engagement for three years, basically overseeing the Youth Zone and working directly with youth in the Alberta GSA network to see what kind of stuff they wanted to do and what events they wanted to see.”

The Youth Zone has played an important part in making the Pride Festival more family friendly.

“I feel like it is gaining more traction and people are aware that it is part of Edmonton Pride,” Demers said. “Youth know that there is a place they can go and hang out.”

The Youth Zone has become an important place to reach out to LGBTQ young people and connect them with valuable resources. According to a survey in 2014, Demers said, 40 per cent of homeless youth in Canada identify as LGBTQ.

“We try to make it as accessible as possible and connecting them with resources in the city is super important for us,” Demers said. “In addition to having beverage gardens and kind of a party theme, we are also including in our programming things that are outside of just the old ‘Pride’s a party.’ We’re advocating for safe housing for our youth, we’re advocating for safe housing for trans youth, we’re advocating for basic human rights.”

“Every youth deserves to have a safe place to be.”

But the Youth Zone is also as much about fun as it is about advocacy. This year’s Youth Zone will include a video-game trailer, oversized board games and a Pride Wall where youth can post notes and messages of positivity and pride for others to view and enjoy.

“We have a lot of moving activities like giant board games, some big inflatables, a big canvas so that kids can do some art while they’re there,” Demers said. “And we try to get as many vendors and resources out as we can — like the Youth Empowerment and Support Services, SAFQEY, the Pride Centre — because youth are coming from all different demographics.”

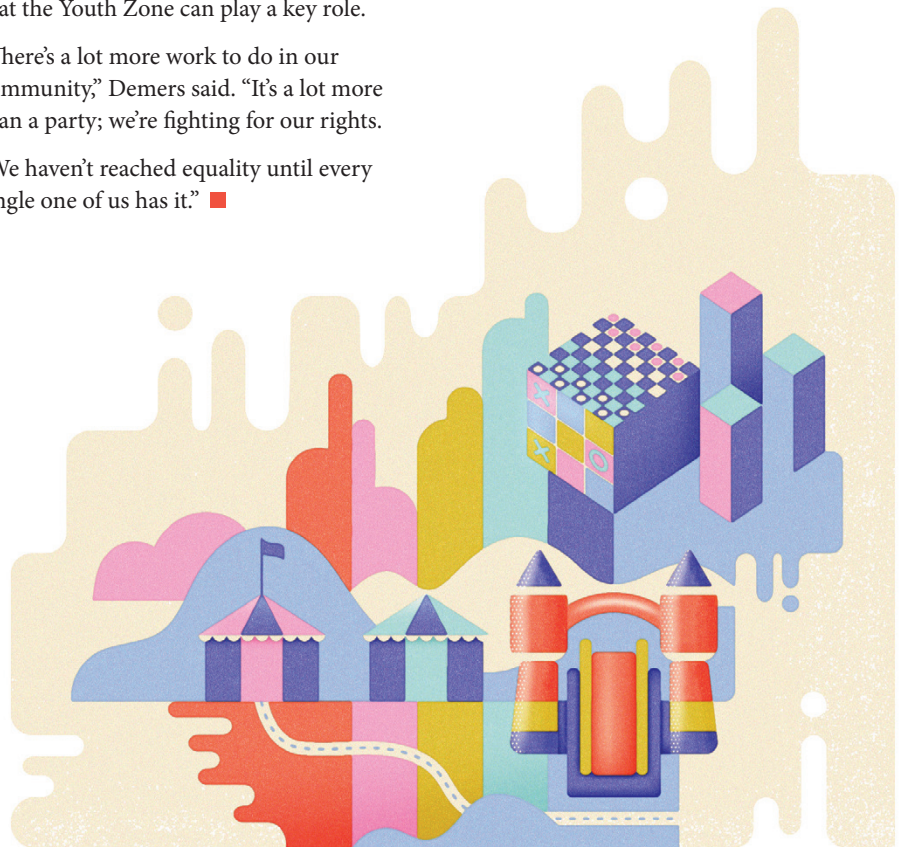
Demers notes that Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) plays an important role for the Youth Zone. Funding from ECF’s Young Edmonton Grants program helps offset the costs of rentals and supplies for the event. “ECF is really important in meeting those costs, and they’ve been so awesome every year,” Demers said.

The Edmonton Pride Festival continues to be equal parts activism and celebration, and Demers acknowledges the LGBTQ community has an ongoing struggle for equality and inclusion. They are optimistic that the Youth Zone can play a key role.

“There’s a lot more work to do in our community,” Demers said. “It’s a lot more than a party; we’re fighting for our rights.”

“We haven’t reached equality until every single one of us has it.” ■

“
I FEEL LIKE IT IS
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”



MISSION FOR DIGNITY

Film project spotlights experiences of disabled Edmontonians

BY: ELIZA BARLOW PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID N.O.

It was a long four minutes for Roxanne Ulanicki – in fact, she describes it as “torturous.”

The disabled Edmontonian, who uses a wheelchair full-time, had just given a talk in a theatre in the city’s downtown. Her speech on human rights and disability drew enthusiastic applause, but instead of exiting the stage gracefully, Ulanicki spent the next four minutes ascending stairs on a wheelchair lift until she reached the “glass box” that is the theatre’s disabled-seating area.

“I have no dignity,” she says, taking herself back to those moments last summer. “The lift blocks the stairs, so everybody has to wait while I’m using it. And then I can’t sit with my family and friends.”

The experiences of Edmonton’s disabled are what Ulanicki and the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights want to spotlight with a new project called YEG Dignity: Amplifying the Voice of People living with Disability.

The project, made possible by a \$10,000 grant from Edmonton Community Foundation, includes four public-service videos and a short film re-creating Ulanicki’s experience at the theatre. The films, produced in partnership with the Self Advocacy Federation and Voices of Albertans with Disabilities, will debut at 2018 Global Dignity Day on Oct. 17.

One focus of the project is how disability and poverty intersect. According to the

Council of Canadians with Disabilities, disabled people are twice as likely to live in poverty as are other Canadians.

“It’s almost a guarantee that if you have a disability you also live in poverty,” says Ulanicki, adding the reasons are wide-ranging, from the cost of equipment such as wheelchairs to many workplaces not being accessible for disabled people.

Ulanicki hopes the project will help empower people with disabilities so that things might be different “for the next generation of me.”

“We’re tired of watching from the outskirts at the top of the stairs. We want to be included.” ■

“ WE’RE TIRED OF WATCHING FROM THE OUTSKIRTS AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS. WE WANT TO BE INCLUDED ”

To take the “awkward” attention away from her, organizers started the next part of the event before she reached her seat.

The irony for Ulanicki was that the experience was no better than the first time she gave the speech, more than a decade earlier, at a theatre where there was no wheelchair lift and she had to be carried on and off the stage.

“It gave me the same feeling,” says the long-time advocate for people with disabilities.

“I gave the same speech – the only thing that changed was my age. Nobody’s asking us (how things could be built better).”



Roxanne Ulanicki speaks at the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights' YEG Dignity 2017 event, on Global Dignity Day, Oct. 18, 2017.

MOVING THE NEEDLE

Edmonton Shift Lab looks at five ways to fight racism

BY: ASHLEY DRYBURGH



Ashley Dryburgh,
Lab Steward, Edmonton Shift Lab

Racism is a complex social ill that is embedded in our culture, in our history and, too often, in our thoughts. How do we begin to move the needle on such a complex problem? Over the past 18 months, the Edmonton Shift Lab has been exploring this question. A partnership between Edmonton Community Foundation and Skills Society Action Lab, the Shift Lab has been using a model known as a “social innovation” to create prototypes that address racism and its links to poverty and housing.

Through this work, we have gleaned many insights about racism. These emerged from multiple places: conversations between lab participants, formal research from community experts (including the Centre for Race and Culture), and sometimes personal experience. There is no “magic bullet” to solve racism. Nevertheless, we have five hypotheses as to where to start.

1. Personal conversations change hearts and minds

Engaging with people on a personal level is the best way to create change. For example, scholar Reza Aslan notes that the best way to erase individual Islamophobia is to meet and speak with a Muslim. If personal conversations are effective, how might we scale them to have an impact against systemic racism?

2. Start small

The Shift Lab creates prototypes; we are clearly biased toward starting small. Breaking down a complex issue like racism gave participants the confidence to suggest solutions and an entry point into the larger problem. Starting small also prevents an

overinvestment of resources before knowing if an intervention is effective.

3. Interventions need to happen on multiple fronts

Interventions cannot happen in one place — they need to include every sector of the community, all levels of governments, businesses, not-for-profits, etc. Likewise, interventions cannot follow the same template. Our hope is that social innovation can be one tool to develop solutions to complex problems and is taken up by a broad range of stakeholders.

4. Get out of comfort zones

Along with personal conversations, getting people out of their comfort zones is key to changing minds. For example, Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse (a Shift Lab Steward) arranged for Shift Lab participants to partake in a sweat. For all of us, the sweat was an opportunity to think, feel, and create knowledge in different ways.

5. Recruit unusual suspects; don't just “preach to the choir.”

During the recruitment process for participants, there was a lot of conversation about who should be in the room. How do we balance the depth of experience and knowledge of folks who have been involved with anti-racism work, against those whose minds we actually need to change? Ultimately, we tipped the balance toward the former, but given additional time, we would have included a more rigorous screening and inclusion process to find and include these “unusual suspects.”

To learn more about the Shift Lab, check out our first-year report at www.edmontonshiftlab.ca ■

“THERE IS NO
“MAGIC BULLET”
TO SOLVE RACISM

Edmonton Vital Signs is an annual check-up conducted by Edmonton Community Foundation, in partnership with Edmonton Social Planning Council, to measure how the community is doing. This year we will also be focusing on individual issues, **VITAL TOPICS**, that are timely and important to Edmonton. Watch for these in each issue of Legacy in Action, and in the full issue of Vital Signs that will be released in October of this year.

Sexual ORIENTATION & GENDER IDENTITY

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

ECF VITAL Work

ARC FOUNDATION received \$38,000 in 2018 for SOGI 123 Alberta, to expand the capacity of Alberta's educators to create inclusive schools for all K-12 students regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. SOGI 1 2 3 helps students of all sexual orientations and identities feel safe and welcome.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

LGBTQ+ has commonly been used to represent the community of people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Gender Queer, Asexual, Transsexual, Androgynous, Intersex, Two-Spirit, Pansexual or other identities.



Since the goal is to be inclusive, and by using a list we may inadvertently exclude someone, we are using the term Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/ expression (SOGI).

VITAL DEFINITIONS

Throughout this report you may see a mix of terms (LGBT, LGBTQ2, etc...) depending on who was included in the research. We hope the definitions below will help define who is included in the stat.

LESBIAN - A woman (or girl) who has an emotional or sexual attraction to other women.

GAY - A person who is attracted to people of the same sex or gender. This term is most often used for a man (or boy) who is attracted to other men.

BISEXUAL - A person who has an emotional or sexual attraction to men and women.

TRANSGENDER - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Some people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms.

QUEER - A reclaimed term used by some people who identify as sexual and/or gender diverse and also used as a positive, inclusive term to describe communities and social movements.

CISGENDER/CIS - A person whose gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

ALLY - A person who advocates for the human rights of sexual and gender diverse people by challenging discrimination and heterosexism.

BINARY - The idea that gender is strictly an either/or option - male or female. Non-binary refers to gender identities that are not exclusively male or female.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEX AND GENDER?

GENDER - Social and cultural expectations of roles and presentation. For most people their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth; others identify as being transgender or gender diverse.

GENDER EXPRESSION - Presentation of a person's gender expressed through an individual's name, pronouns, appearance, behaviour, or body characteristics. What society identifies as masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture.

GENDER IDENTITY - A person's deep-seated, felt sense of gender, or how a person feels on the inside, regardless of what their body looks like.

SEX AT BIRTH (Sex) - Refers to the categories people are typically assigned at birth. This often appears on identity documents.

ECF VITAL Work

THE RAINBOW FUND at ECF supports registered charities that support, research, and enhance SOGI activities and initiatives in greater Edmonton and Northern Alberta. Go to Ecfoundation.org to make a donation.

MAY 14,
1969

Amendments to the Criminal Code pass, decriminalizing homosexuality in Canada.

APR 2,
1998

The Supreme Court of Canada unanimously rules in the Vriend case that the exclusion of homosexuals from Alberta's Individual Rights Protection Act is a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

JUL 20,
2005

The right for same-sex couples to marry becomes law.

JUN 19,
2017

Gender expression and gender identity is added to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code.

NOV 28,
2017

Prime Minister Trudeau apologizes to LGBTQ people for discrimination faced as a result of federal legislation, policies and programs.

LIMITATIONS IN RESEARCH: It is important to note that statistics and data are most compiled in binary categories (male or female). Similarly, often it is assumed that there are gay or straight couples only.

SOGI EDMONTONIANS

SAME-SEX COUPLES IN CANADA:

1%

OF ALL COUPLES IN CANADA ARE SAME-SEX COUPLES

FROM 2006-2016 SAME-SEX COUPLES **DOUBLED** IN EDMONTON

12%

OF SAME-SEX COUPLES IN CANADA HAVE CHILDREN LIVING WITH THEM. (51.4% OF OPPOSITE SEX COUPLES)

33%

OF SAME-SEX COUPLES IN CANADA ARE MARRIED

ACCEPTANCE & BELONGING

ALBERTA TRANS YOUTH SURVEY represents the experiences of 114 younger (14-18 years) and older (19-25 years) trans youth living in Alberta.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Safety, violence, and discrimination are major issues. 75% of youth under 18 report discrimination because of their gender
- 80%+ of trans youth (14-18) reported their family did not understand them
- Almost 70% of trans youth reported experiences of sexual harassment

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

8% OF RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED AS **LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, QUEER, OR TWO-SPIRIT** IN THE 2016 EDMONTON HOMELESS COUNT

Top reasons why LGBT youth are at risk/or homeless (multiple responses allowed):

46%
RAN AWAY
because of family rejection

43%
FORCED OUT
by parents

32%
ABUSED
physically, emotionally, or sexually

HEALTH & WELL BEING

Young LGBTQ Adults who experienced high levels of rejection were:

6x LIKELY TO HAVE HIGH LEVELS OF **DEPRESSION**

8x LIKELY TO HAVE ATTEMPTED **SUICIDE**

3x LIKELY TO USE **ILLEGAL DRUGS**

3x LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN UNPROTECTED SEX -INCREASING RISK OF **STDs**

TRANS PEOPLE REPORT **DIFFICULTY ACCESSING PRIMARY AND SPECIALIST CARE.**

ECF VITAL Work

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA received \$7,700 for the Gender Program in 2018, for equipment to facilitate new group therapy sessions at the Gender Program (a multidisciplinary health program for transgender and gender diverse people).



SENIORS

Current research estimates that up to seven per cent of the senior population is openly LGBTQ.

EDMONTON LGBTQ SENIORS HOUSING REPORT

According to a needs assessment, compared to their heterosexual counterparts:

- LGBTQ2 older adults are often more likely to have a difficult time securing housing.
- Older adults are reluctant to be open about sexual orientation or gender identity due to lifetime experiences with discrimination.

TWO-SPIRIT

An English-language 'term' to reflect and restore Indigenous traditions forcefully suppressed by colonization, honouring the fluid and diverse nature of gender and attraction and its connection to community and spirituality. It is used by some Indigenous people rather than, or in addition to, identifying as LGBTQ. Two-spirit individuals are held in high honour in their communities.

NEWCOMERS & REFUGEES

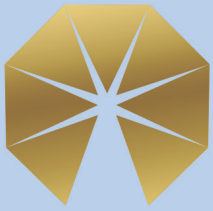
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and the Pride Centre have partnered to support LGBTQ+ Newcomers in Edmonton. 43 individuals have accessed services between Sep 2017 and Mar 2018.

BE AN ALLY – Words matter. When talking with and about sexual and gender minority people, use inclusive language and avoid reinforcing stereotypes and assumptions of the gender of people who perform various roles.

For example: "spouse" instead of husband or wife. Ask a person's pronouns and state yours, creating a safe space for others.

Be an advocate. Create a space for all voices to be heard. Take action against discrimination or hate in your community.

Educate yourself. Learn the terms, definitions and language used. Never make assumptions. If you don't know, ask. Check your privilege and do not assume to know the sexual orientation or gender identity of another person.



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