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FALL 2025





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Message from the **CEO**

Purposeful and Meaningful

EARLY IN MY time at Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), I heard Joseph Malins' poem *The Ambulance Down in the Valley* and it has stayed with me. It tells of a town where people kept falling off a cliff, and so the community rallied to place an ambulance in the valley below. But even as more people fell, and more ambulances arrived, no one questioned why people were falling in the first place — until someone finally asked: what if we built a fence at the top? Last year was an exceptional one for ECF — demonstrating what's possible when individuals, families, organizations, businesses and partners unite to strengthen our community.

This story resonates deeply in the charitable sector. Urgent needs often demand immediate responses. But the evidence is clear: to create lasting change we need to look upstream — to invest in preventing harm, not just responding to it. Thanks to ECF's long-term investment strategy and endowment model, we're uniquely positioned to do this.

Over the past two years, we've met with partners across sectors — funders, charities and community members — to better understand where coordinated investment in a few foundational areas can have positive ripple effects in many others. Two interconnected priorities emerged as vital to Edmonton's future: early childhood development and affordable housing.

The first five years of a child's life shape everything that follows. Yet in Alberta, research has shown that more than half of the children in Edmonton start school already behind. By investing early — supporting families, caregivers and the network of organizations focused on early childhood education — we can create lifelong benefits: better health, stronger educational outcomes and more resilient communities.

At the same time, safe, stable housing is the foundation of so many things. According to the City of Edmonton, nearly one in eight households in Edmonton are in need of stable accommodations — facing unaffordable, unsafe or unsuitable housing. By unlocking investment and innovation, we can help ensure housing is more accessible



and affordable, reducing stress, providing stability and creating a sense of belonging that all communities and people need.

ECF has the connections, patience and capital to provide meaningful support in both areas using tools like grants, capital investments, social financing, community development and collaborations.

What's even more powerful is how these two priorities reinforce one another. Children flourish in secure homes. Families thrive when they're not forced to choose between rent and food.

This doesn't change our long-standing commitment to funding a wide range of initiatives, and connecting donors to the causes they care about. But by focusing more of our discretionary resources — and inviting others to join us — we can help catalyze meaningful, measurable change in our city.

Together, we can build that fence at the top of the cliff.

Tina Thomas

Chief Executive Officer

Apply today

Together, we pursue excellence

Ready to take the next step in your public service career?

The Al Maurer Awards help public servants in roles with the municipal, provincial or federal government pursue further education from law and business to engineering and urban planning.

Where will your public service career take you? Let us help you get there.

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Apply today

Together, we lift up the community

Scan the QR code to get started



Scholarships for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students pursuing post-secondary education

Charmaine Letourneau Scholarships were created in honour of her advocacy for Deaf Canadians. The scholarship helps those with financial need to fund their post-secondary education.

Know a Deaf or Hard of Hearing student who's involved in the community, diligent in their studies and has knowledge of sign language? They might be the perfect fit.





GIVING WITH A GLOW

Purana Skincare blends business and generosity

When Jane Goldrup founded Purana Skincare, she set out to do more than create clean, effective products - she wanted her business to reflect her deep commitment to community. Today, through the Purana Legacy Fund at Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), that commitment is taking shape.

"Partnering with ECF is helping us turn our values into long-term impact," she says.

By donating a portion of Purana's revenue to the fund each year, Goldrup is creating sustainable support for charities that help children thrive — simplifying the giving process while maximizing its reach.

"For us, it's always been about more than skincare," she says. "It's about creating a ripple effect of good that lives far beyond the bottle."

FUNDS IN FOCUS

As students return to class, we're highlighting endowments that help learners thrive today and will keep opening doors for generations.

Legacy of Learning Peng Mok IB Fellowship Scholarship Fund

Established by his family in 2023, this scholarship honours Peng Mok's academic spirit and memory, awarding over \$3,700 to two IB graduates from Harry Ainlay School – keeping his legacy alive through learning.

Standing Ovation Tom & Judith Peacocke Fund

Created in 2021, this fund honours Tom and Judith's love for the arts, granting over \$2,400 to support U of A drama students in pursuing their craft.

Faith in the Future Riad & Buthyna Assaf Scholarship Fund

Part of the Al Rashid Education Fund family, this scholarship honours the Assafs' commitment to education, granting \$493 in 2024 and advancing inclusive, values-based giving through ECF's Shariah-compliant investment portfolio.

DID YOU KNOW?

ECF has granted \$439 million since 1990, including \$35.5 million in 2024 Top sectors supported in 2024:

Human Services

Arts, Culture & Heritage

\$10.1 million

772 initiatives

\$8.7 million

407 projects

Education



LISTEN UP!

What if a tattoo stood between you and a fresh start? Tune into ECF's national award-winning podcast to discover how enCompass is helping Edmontonians rewrite their stories - one tattoo removal at a time.

Scan to listen to The Well Endowed Podcast

SOCIAL SEEN



On June 26, Pride vs. Prejudice screened at Toronto's TIFF Lightbox. The documentary, produced by ECF and the Edmonton Queer History Project, is now touring nationally with support from 26 community foundations.

Darrin Hagen, Director Pride vs. Prejudice

More than 500 people attended ECF's Annual Luncheon on June 24 where keynote speaker, Zita Cobb, inspired the room to centre "place" in our approach to economic development.



(L to R) Tina Thomas, CEO ECF, Erin Gobolos, Interim ED of ABC Head Start Society, Zita Cobb, Founder, CEO at Shorefast, Gail Stepanik-Keber, ECF Board Member, Elisa Hung, ECF Board Chair.



(L to R) Alex Draper, Winspear Centre, Rahki Pancholi, MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud, Tina Thomas, CEO ECF and Cheryl Whiskeyjack

On May 1. YWCA Edmonton's Women of Distinction Luncheon honoured women and gender-diverse leaders driving change in our community. ECF was proud to sponsor this inspiring event.



PHILANTHROPY WITH A KICK

ECF's Annual Luncheon looks back to launch forward

New Roots Breaking Studio from iHuman Youth Society energized ECF's Annual Luncheon on June 24 at the Edmonton Expo Centre. The celebration highlighted ECF's impact in 2024 and set the stage for collaboration in 2025 — with a strong focus on affordable housing, early childhood development and building momentum for lasting change.

FRESHLY FUNDED ECF grants shaping 2025

Latitude 53 Society of Artists

A \$34,500 Community Grant is helping renovate the gallery space to better support artists and visitors - creating a vibrant, long-term home for contemporary art in Edmonton.

Action for Healthy Communities

With a \$79,900 Community Grant, the E.M.P.O.W.E.R. program will launch career exploration supports for women from equity-deserving communities, helping them connect with new pathways and possibilities.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton

A \$47,600 Community Grant is expanding Wonders of Wildlife programming to reach more Indigenous and marginalized communities doubling its impact and inspiring local connections to nature.





WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

We want to hear from you! Share your questions, stories or thanks about Edmonton's charitable sector and ECF. Your voice could be featured in a future issue of *Thrive* to inspire our community.

Email us at info@ecf.ca

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

ECF events and deadlines you don't want to miss!

Community Grant Application Deadline

Sept. 12 at 12pm

Up to \$80,000 to support your charitable organization.

Apply at ecf.ca/grants

BBMA Gala and Sash Ceremony

Sept. 20

Edmonton Inn and Conference Centre 11834 Kingsway Ave.

Celebrate the 2025 recipients of the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards.

Visit bbma.ca for details.

Small Grants Application Deadline

Sept. 30 at 11:59pm

Up to \$10,000 to help your charity address urgent needs.

Apply at ecf.ca/grants

Charmaine Letourneau Scholarships Application Deadline

Sept. 30 at 4:30pm

\$1,000-\$7,000 to help Deaf or Hard of Hearing students pursuing vocational or postsecondary education.

Apply at ecf.ca/student-awards

Al Maurer Awards Application Deadline

Sept. 30 at 11:59pm

\$500-\$2,000 to support students pursuing classical music study.

Apply at ecf.ca/student-awards

Wills Week

Oct. 6-10

Various locations and online.

Free info sessions on wills, estate planning and being an executor from ECF's team of volunteer estate lawyers.

Visit ecf.ca/wills-week for details.

Young Edmonton Grants Application Deadline

Oct. 15, at 11:59pm

Up to \$3,000 to support projects initiated and led by youth between the ages of 13-24

Apply at ecf.ca/youth-grants

Youth VOICE Application Deadline

Oct. 31 at 11:59pm

Up to \$5,000 to fund innovative projects that are initiated, led and organized by students enrolled in Grades 7-12.

Apply at ecf.ca/youth-grants



STAY IN THE LOOP

Want more stories and news from Edmonton's charitable sector? Sign up for ECF's monthly newsletter.



Bridging the **Generational Gap**

Fighting loneliness by fostering connections between seniors and students

By ZACHARY AYOTTE Illustration NICK ROSS

DURING THE EARLY days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when it became clear that senior citizens were especially vulnerable to the virus, a secondary crisis was also rearing its head: loneliness. The lockdowns imposed to help protect at-risk communities from the virus also separated seniors from visitors and loved ones. To many who were paying heightened attention during COVID, the isolation seniors were facing was a phenomenon brought on by pandemic-era conditions. But for Debbie Sinclair, senior isolation was not news.

Sinclair is the Executive Director of Linking Generations, a charitable organization that has been working to lessen senior isolation by creating opportunities for youth and seniors to spend time together and become friends.

Established in 2004 by Carol Parsons, Linking Generations began as a small not-for-profit that ran programs pairing seniors with junior high and high school-aged kids who share common interests or life experiences. The students were welcomed into senior facilities where they met with their seniors for structured visits. "Every visit there's a planned activity," Sinclair says. "One visit will be led by the senior. One will be led by the students." From there, relationships begin to form.

Sinclair started volunteering with Linking Generations after retirement, when she discovered that retired life wasn't for her. A few years later, when Parsons was ready to retire, Sinclair looked at all the good work the organization was doing and decided she needed to keep it going. She stepped into the executive >



director role, taking on a position unlike any she'd had before. "I had never in my life run an organization where I had to fundraise and work with kids and seniors alike," Sinclair says. "But I am so fortunate because I found my passion."

Sinclair's passion for her work is palpable and quantitative. When she took over Linking Generations, the organization was running two to three in-school programs. Since then, they have expanded to six with the help of Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF).

In 2023, ECF provided a \$13,900 Small Grant to the organization to expand its capacity. The funding allowed Linking Generations to create additional programming, designed to service members of the senior community who weren't interested or able to participate in the in-school programs. The first addition was a share-andcare program, where elementary students visit seniors in long-term care facilities.

"Meaningful relationships are essential to mental well-being," Tracey Gleason, Donor Grants Associate at ECF says. "When people feel a sense of belonging and purpose, communities thrive. Linking Generations is doing an outstanding job of fostering those connections and strengthening the fabric of our community."

To pilot the share-and-care program, Linking Generations approached a school they had an excellent working relationship with; the whole school got involved. "Every single week, a different class would go, and we watched these seniors who sometimes are sitting in wheelchairs, who are not engaged - they just beamed."

They also added a volunteer grandparent program, where seniors who are still living at home can participate in structured visits to high schools and share their stories with youth. They now have over 100 students participating in the program.

Sinclair says the organization's growth is a sign that there is demand for programs like theirs, but the organization is careful not to expand too quickly. "We make sure before we do any type of expansion that the funding is there, and that we can sustain that program for a minimum of five years."

This patience reflects the thoughtful approach Linking Generations takes when engaging with seniors and students. Sinclair understands that her organization is building lasting friendships — many of which continue after students graduate from the program.

Linking Generations' programs are over subscribed by students each year, in part because students want to make these connections as much as seniors. As she looks to the future, Sinclair is focused on maintaining all the work they've done in the community — all the friendships they've fostered, and on finding ways to responsibly grow. The success Linking Generations has had proves that there is demand for intergenerational relationships. They just need fostering and support.



Blending Legacies

Thoughtful estate planning can help blended families avoid conflict

By ECF Staff Photo Cooper & O'Hara Photography

PLANNING YOUR ESTATE is always important - but for blended families, it can be especially complex. From balancing the needs of children from previous relationships to ensuring a new spouse is cared for, thoughtful planning can help prevent conflict and preserve harmony. We spoke with Colleen Feehan, a wills and estates lawver whose practice focuses on planning, administration, litigation and mediation, to explore how blended families can navigate these sensitive decisions with clarity and care.

Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF): What considerations need to be made when it comes to estate planning for blended families?

Colleen Feehan (CF): When considering your legacy in the context of a blended family, it is important to balance the financial needs and expectations of current and former partners, and children from past and present relationships.

Consider the age, vulnerability and personal relationship with each child. Children who are under the age of 18, in post-secondary education or who are adults unable to earn a livelihood have statutory rights to support from a parent's estate.

A new spouse's standard of living and expectations should also be clearly addressed, as spouses also have statutory rights to support from the estate.

ECF: What are the legal requirements for leaving assets to a spouse versus children?

CF: Legally, you can leave assets to anyone. However, if your surviving spouse's lifestyle is drastically altered — especially without prior agreement — there could be trouble. A spouse has a right to seek support from the estate if not adequately provided for, even if children are named as beneficiaries.

To avoid conflict, spouses can enter into cohabitation, prenuptial or postnuptial agreements to clearly outline estate intentions. These are typically upheld by courts after death if that spouse changes their mind.

If you wish to leave assets to children from a prior relationship, using tools such as life insurance. RRSPs or TFSAs can be effective. Naming the children as beneficiaries of these accounts keeps these assets outside the estate and reduces the chance of spousal claims.

Another option is a spousal trust, which allows a spouse to benefit from investment income during their lifetime while ensuring the capital goes to your children after the death of the surviving spouse.

ECF: How should couples handle the family home in blended families?

CF: In blended families, giving a surviving spouse a life interest in the family home can help balance their housing needs with preserving inheritance for children. This arrangement, outlined in your will, allows your spouse to live in the home — without owning it — until they pass away or decide to move. During that time, they're usually responsible for paying taxes and maintenance of the home. Once they move or pass, the house reverts back to the estate for the children to inherit or manage.

ECF: What steps can prevent estate disputes in blended families?

CF: While there are many legal avenues to avoid conflict and tension in blended families after death, open and honest discussions about your estate plan while you are alive is one of the best. When everyone understands your wishes in advance, it is easier for them to accept the outcome and maintain a healthy relationship with one another.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Join Edmonton Community Foundation's Wills Week, running October 6 to 10.

These free sessions - led by volunteer estate lawyers cover wills, personal directives and more.

Attend in person at venues across the city or join online.

Full schedule at ecf.ca/wills-week



GIVING BACK, DAY BY DAY

Seanna Collins and her husband are supporting the community forever through a will intention

By **ECF Staff**

FOR DECADES, SEANNA COLLINS

has been a familiar face and voice in Edmonton's media and charitable scene. She's interviewed countless community leaders over the years. One conversation while hosting Day by Day, CFRN TV's daytime lifestyle show in the early '90s, really stayed with her.

"I had the pleasure of interviewing Robert Stollery and John Poole. They had just helped establish Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF)," Collins recalls. "They were passionate, down-to-earth, and driven to make a difference. That interview planted a seed. My husband and I decided to set up an ECF endowment fund — one that will support the many causes we care about."

Collins began her fund planning with Kathy Hawkesworth, ECF's former Director of Donor Services, and now works with Philanthropy Advisor Lisa Dayanandan. The smooth transition has reinforced her trust in ECF's lasting stewardship. "Working with Kathy and now Lisa, you can come in with a plan in mind, and there are people at the Foundation who will help make your dreams come true," she says.

ECF's grant process ensures accountability and honours donor intent, which Collins, a detail-driven professional, appreciates.

"I want to know our money is going where it's supposed to," she says. "With ECF, I don't have to worry — there's no stress."

Collins's decision to work with ECF was guided by empathy for those who will manage her estate. Initially, she listed dozens of individual charities in her will but later updated her fund agreement to simplify the process.

"I didn't want my executor to have to write 50 cheques to 50 different charities," she says. "With ECF, it's one cheque — and the Foundation takes care of the rest. That's peace of mind."

Collins also gives back by emceeing fundraisers, collecting donations for women and children, and volunteering with Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society — where she boards dogs in training as service animals, as well as sitting on the organization's board.

"This city has given me so much," she says. "Along with my husband, this is our way of giving back to the place that's been our home for so many years."

Reflecting on her journey, Collins says estate planning through ECF has brought clarity and calm. "It makes me so happy to know that long after my husband and I are gone, our fund will continue to grow and make a difference. That's the legacy we are very proud to leave." _____



You can start a fund, too!

Work with Edmonton Community Foundation to ensure your charitable giving is set up for long-term growth

MAKE A DIFFERENCE in your community. Edmonton Community Foundation can help ensure your charitable giving is set up for long-term growth and greater impact.

Setting up an endowment fund provides a permanent investment of charitable gifts. You can determine your philanthropic wishes; decide what you want to accomplish; and define the legacy you want to leave. You can set up your fund for yourself, your family or your business!

It's up to you. Here's how it works:

1

Speak with one of our philanthropy advisors about your charitable interests to determine which fund options are right for you. You can choose to support important causes locally, nationally or around the world.

2

Once you've defined the objective of your fund, we'll create an agreement that captures your intentions. It's a straightforward document that explains the goal of your fund, how involved you would like to be in allocating grants, and other relevant details. There's no obligation for you during this process — we simply want to ensure we've documented your wishes correctly.

3

4

When your fund is ready to grant, your level of involvement going forward is your choice. You could seek input from your family. Many businesses include employees or clients in deciding what causes to support each year. This becomes a powerful tool to showcase your commitment to what matters. You can also get creative with future fundraising efforts like special events, golf tournaments or corporate matching programs.

You make the decisions. We provide the information. Learn more at ecf.ca



Our collective impact in 2024 Investing in our community

Together we thrive.

Because of you, Edmonton Community Foundation is the largest nongovernmental funder of Edmonton's charitable sector. In 2024, your support helped us invest in the people and projects shaping a better future.



Funding the Future

Our endowment model ensures that your contributions create lasting impact — today and for generations to come. Through responsible fund stewardship and growth, we're a reliable, sustainable support for Edmonton's evolving needs.

Total Funds 1,751

(2023: 1.636)

0

New Funds

115

(2023:92)



Explore what you make possible. ecf.ca/impact2024

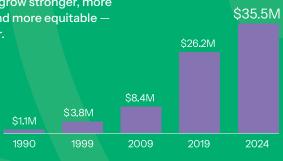
Donations

\$29.5M

79.5%: Less than \$1,000 20.5%: More than \$1,000

Granting History

We're proud to support thousands of initiatives and causes across our city. Our granting history reflect a deep, sustained commitment to helping communities grow stronger, more connected, and more equitable — year after year.



\$439
Million
granted over
34 years

\$1.6 Awarded to \$1.6 Students

\$52.7
Million
Social Purpose
Investments







In Perpetuity

The Delta Upsilon fraternity wants to give today, tomorrow and for years to come

By TOM NDEKEZI

THE MEMBERS OF Delta Upsilon's Alberta Chapter are no strangers to giving, but after their annual 24-hour Bike-a-Thon raised over \$6,000 in support of the Heart and Stroke Foundation this past February — a matching donation from a corporate sponsor would take that total to over \$20,000 — the fraternity's leadership started to think bigger.

"That was pretty impressive for us and it got all the guys motivated," recalls Dylan Johannesson, an operations management major at the University of Alberta and the chapter's current President.

That motivation would also come with a new focus. When it came time to plan their Summer Solstice Volleyball Tournament this past June, the fraternity's executive team began to ask a different question: instead of just giving once, how could they make a lasting impact, right in their own community?

A different kind of fraternity

Delta Upsilon — or "DU" as members call it — has a history of doing things differently. Founded in 1834, it was the first fraternity to adopt a policy of nonsecrecy. It was, and still is, an unusual stance, especially at a time when many fraternities operated more like secret societies, sharing knowledge and influence behind closed doors.

"Our founders didn't want to hide anything," Johannesson explains. "We were one of the first non-secret fraternities, and it just helps get the word around."

For Samuel Stratton, a finance major at the University of Alberta as well as the chapter's Vice President Finance, that transparency is also about fairness. "You hear a lot about the stereotype of a 22-year-old business student getting hired at some great company because of his frat connections," he says. "(Non-secrecy) tries to rectify that and level the playing field by letting everyone know who is in the fraternity."

DU's four guiding principles — the promotion of friendship, the development of character, the diffusion of liberal culture and the advancement of justice — are built into everything the fraternity does. The fraternity's motto, "Building Better Men," is also more than a slogan; it's a measure of success.

"We try to incorporate the principles as best we can into anything we do, whether that's a philanthropy event or even just hanging out," Johannesson says. "We have a non-secret, open invite policy for most of our events so that people can just come in and socialize."

A different kind of partnership

When the chapter was brainstorming how to channel their post-Bike-a-Thon momentum into something more local, Edmonton's Food Bank quickly rose to the top of the list.

"It was the first idea thrown out, and no one really had anything to top it," Stratton says. "We figured it would be impactful and do some good."

And while exploring ways to support the food bank, Stratton stumbled on a familiar idea with a unique appeal.

Stratton looked at the food bank's website and saw that endowment giving was an option. "All of our scholarships at DU are done the same way," he explains. Individuals, families, organizations or businesses can establish an endowment and a percentage of the value of the

fund is granted while the rest of the fund continues to grow in perpetuity.

"For myself and my friends in the finance world, that just seemed like a really fun way to give back."

Partnering with the Edmonton Community Foundation

Turning that idea into reality also meant finding the right partner.

DU found exactly what they needed with the Edmonton Community

Foundation (ECF): the ability to set up a private endowment without the administrative headaches.

While Edmonton's Food Bank maintains its own endowment, partnering with ECF allowed the chapter to establish its own fund, which it dubbed the Delta Upsilon Building Better Futures Fund.

"We were delighted when Samuel reached out — it's a great reminder that endowments are for everyone, including students," says Lisa Dayanandan, Philanthropy Advisor at ECF. "ECF's endowment model is a perfect fit for Delta Upsilon's long-term vision. Their fund will allow the fraternity to support the Food Bank for generations, long after current members have moved on to their careers."

The goal is to raise \$10,000 within three years — although Johannesson and Stratton are hoping to do it in two. >

Edmonton's Food Bank collected over
6 million kilograms of food (2024)

Once the milestone is met, annual grants will support the food bank, with the fund growing under ECF's stewardship and further contributions from DU and the public.

"It was a very streamlined process," Stratton says. "Edmonton Community Foundation did a great job of telling us everything we need to be aware of and answering all of our concerns."

Johannesson agrees. "We had no experience setting up endowments as university students," he says. "They made it easy and it helped a lot."

The Delta Upsilon Building Better Futures Fund comes with no strings attached; the chapter is happy for the food bank to use the funds as it sees fit. Still, the benefits go both ways, with the initiative offering the members a real-world exercise in project management, financial planning and community engagement.

A lasting legacy

Creating a legacy that would endure even beyond their time on campus also resonated deeply with the members of DU.

"This is the 90th year of our chapter being at the University of Alberta campus, so it's a big year for us," Johannesson says.

"The (fraternity alumni) community is also very supportive. We'll do charity events and people will be donating from all corners of the globe," he adds. "It's that support that you get from people that you've never met that gives you a sense of camaraderie and brotherhood."

The alumni connection is also more than sentimental. DU has a list of decades-old traditions that have survived the test of time, in no small part because of the sense of stewardship passed down over the years.

"It's great when you talk to an alumnus and they ask, 'Do you still do this?' and we can say, 'Yeah, we still do the beach volleyball tournament every summer solstice," Johannesson says. "That's the kind of tradition we want for this fund."

Stratton hopes the fund will also become a handson project for new members. "I want as many guys as possible to be able to say, 'Yeah, I contributed to this. I helped raise money," he says. "That's my goal."

How to contribute

The Delta Upsilon Building Better Futures Fund is live on the ECF website. Donations of any size bring the chapter closer to its \$10,000 goal and help secure a lasting source of support for Edmonton's Food Bank. ecf-



Help Shape Edmonton's Future.

Join ECF's Grants Sub-Committees and help decide which projects get funded in our city. As a volunteer reviewer, you'll evaluate applications and champion initiatives that strengthen Edmonton's communities.

Your perspective matters — we welcome volunteers from every background and experience level.



Ready to make a difference? ecf.ca/get-involved



You're still one family

Melissa Bourgeois's practice is changing how couples divorce

By CAITLIN HART Photos KATE ASTAIRE

LAW HAS BEEN called the "burnout profession." A 2022 study found that billable hours and emotional demands of clients contribute significantly to burnout and mental-health challenges in the profession — factors that can hit family lawyers particularly hard, as they navigate some of the most challenging circumstances families face, like divorce and custody.

Melissa Bourgeois, founder of One Family Law, has seen firsthand the toll that traditional practice can take on lawyers and clients alike. As a family lawyer for over a decade, she's felt it herself.

"I was kind of at the end of my rope in terms of the traditional models of family law. It just didn't make sense to me," Bourgeois says. "It was something that I found difficult even when I was representing just one client, to forget that the other person was a human having their own lived experience."

Searching for a better, gentler way to practice took her to London in 2019, where legal professionals had started representing divorcing couples together. The model, referred to as "One Couple, One Lawyer" or joint representation in England and Wales, allows a lawyer to represent both sides in a legal separation. >





For Bourgeois, it seemed like a nobrainer, offering a streamlined process with less financial burden on couples who, as Bourgeois puts it, take different paths while maintaining love, respect and care for each other.

But before she could start practicing in this innovative way, she had some hoops to jump through. The Law Society of Alberta's code precludes lawyers from representing opposing parties in active dispute. But not every divorcing couple sees themselves as opposing each other.

"This was a really big seismic shift for the Law Society (of Alberta) to conceptualize, the concept of one lawyer being able to help both people," she explains.

It took two-and-a-half years for her practice to be granted a special 18-month pilot, through the Law Society of Alberta's Innovation Sandbox, which allows lawyers and businesses to explore innovative ideas and services in a regulated space. With funding from Edmonton Community Foundation's Social Enterprise Fund (SEF), she launched the pilot in January 2023.

This pilot phase allowed her to direct time to research. Rather than focusing solely on the day-to-day, the SEF funding enabled One Family Law to do its legal reform work and research. The pilot was successful and the Law Society extended One Family Law permission to practice on an ongoing basis. She hopes this will allow more families across the country to access this kind of practice, as she works on expanding One Family Law and preparing to train other lawyers in the methodology she's still the only lawyer practicing

law this way in North America.

Without funding from SEF, Bourgeois wouldn't be able to keep the lights on, or research and develop materials to expand this kind of practice and help more families — and push for wider reform.

"I don't run a traditional law firm," she says. "It's a legal reform project."

That legal reform follows a shifting culture around divorce.

Thirty-eight per cent of marriages in Canada end in divorce. Rates peaked after "no-fault" divorce became legal in Canada in 1986, a reform which meant couples could divorce more easily.

"HEALTHIER FAMILIES MAKE HEALTHIER KIDS, AND THEN THEY GROW UP TO BE HEALTHY HUMANS."

Melissa Bourgeois

Couples divorce for all kinds of reasons beyond circumstances like abuse and infidelity. Many divorces today are amicable. Couples may grow apart, but still have love for each other and a desire to co-parent. Every time Bourgeois does media, she says, One Family Law gets more interest from clients. There's a huge demand for this new way of doing things.

As Bourgeois sees in her practice, many parents today have seen the trauma that divorce inflicts on children - and they want to minimize the impacts of divorce on their families and broader social circles. One Family Law is not building cases as much as

helping families come up with a plan for moving forward together, even as their family is changing.

"The shift does come in the clients themselves, acknowledging and accepting (their) relationship has changed," Bourgeois says. "We can still coexist peacefully, even if we choose to untangle ourselves from a legal perspective."

By responding to clients' changing needs, One Family Law is shifting the experience of divorce - not only for the couple going through it, but for their families, social circles and everyone else who comes in contact with the family. As Bourgeois says, professionals can find themselves in the crosshairs of an acrimonious divorce where the two parties are locked in battle.

"You're still one family. It just looks a little bit different."

And rather than completing the divorce process years and tens, even hundreds, of thousands of dollars later, exhausted and bitter, families "leave our offices very grateful and thankful and really empowered to move forward together," Bourgeois adds. The traditional way of practicing family law does not leave people empowered,

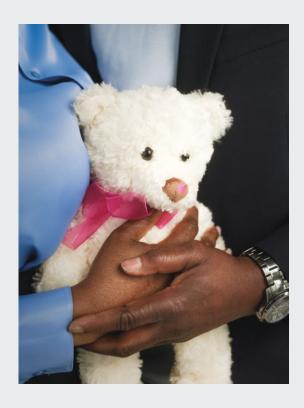
That new approach has implications for the future, too.

"Healthier families make healthier kids, and then they grow up to be healthy humans."

One Family Law isn't just transforming divorce - they're helping build a kinder world.

"I just believe in the power of kindness and love can really change and transform." _____

Transforming Grief Turning loss into a legacy of hope By LISA OSTROWSKI | Photos COOPER & O'HARA



hen Carisa and Neville Britton first met as university students, the pair had no idea that a chance meeting in the library would lead them to build a legacy in Edmonton: a city they didn't yet know would one day be their home.

"I moved away from my parents and went to university, and that's how I met Neville, and then it sort of blossomed into something. He was like my best friend," explains Carisa. "I really believe in being best friends, and then you can weather any storm."

Now, more than 20 years after their first meeting — and nearly 5,000 kilometres away — the two have set down roots in Edmonton, and weathered many storms together. In December 2012, Neville moved to Edmonton for a job opportunity. And although the climate was a far cry from the Caribbean temperatures he was used to, he was determined to make it work.

"It was a challenge at first, but I think the resilience and mindset change made things a little bit easier to absorb because I'm a person that if I put my mind and my heart into something, regardless of the challenges, I'll make it work," he says.

As Neville layered up in Edmonton, Carisa prepared to follow suit. In 2013, after researching the city and the community of people who call Edmonton home, she packed her bags and joined Neville in Edmonton. In time, the couple came to love their new home.

As the Brittons adjusted to the cooler climate, the couple settled in, and became more involved in the community through Neville's work and Carisa's involvement in a local chapter of Rotary International. >





In 2018, their lives in Edmonton firmly established, they got some exciting news: their family would soon be growing. At first, they were hesitant to get their hopes up after a history of miscarriages. But as Carisa reached the end of her first trimester, their feelings began to change.

"This one was different in the sense that I had passed my first trimester, and I remember our doctor, she was saying, 'you guys should be excited.' But because of our past history, we were really on the cautious side," says Carisa.

Over time, caution gave way to optimism and anticipation. The couple found out the sex of the baby — a girl — and prepared to welcome her, buying books and making plans for a nursery.

"Neville was excited. He was reading to the baby at night, and we were all excited," Carisa explains.

Unfortunately, the spark of excitement and hope would be short lived. At 24-weeks pregnant, Carisa's water broke. The pair rushed to the hospital, fearing the worst.

"They told us that it's a 50/50 chance, meaning that they're going to put me on bedrest, but they're not sure which direction it will go: it could take several turns," explains Carisa. "And the turn that it took was a turn for the worst."

After monitoring Carisa's health, doctors were forced to induce labour in order to save both her and her baby's lives. On February 11, 2019, Carisa gave birth to a baby girl, Jessica Carisa Britton. The Brittons were hopeful about Jessica's chances of survival, as doctors noted she was born with a strong heartbeat, but sadly she passed away the next day, surrounded by the love of her parents.

"You know, when someone would say, you have this picture-perfect family so you have a photograph, and this family looks really perfect. And then one day that picture, it falls on the ground, and it all shatters," says Carisa. "I feel like a part of me died."

"I really believe in being best friends, and then you can weather any storm."

- Carisa Britton



The loss was devastating to both Carisa and Neville. In the months that followed, they navigated many stages of grief, together, with counsellors, and with the support of the community. In time, they came to realize that they wanted to turn Jessica's short life — and the few beautiful hours they had together — into an everlasting legacy.

Initially, the Brittons began talking about forming a foundation in Jessica's honour, to support and thank the team at the Royal Alexandra Hospital who had cared for them when Jessica was born. But the process of forming a foundation was complex and unclear. It was only once a friend suggested they look into Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) that they realized creating a legacy for Jessica was well within reach.

The couple founded the Jessica Carisa Britton Fund, with the intention of supporting and strengthening the community they now call home. Today, the fund is still growing, and will be ready to start granting by the end of 2025 — ensuring that Jessica's memory will live on through generations of community support.

"Even though she didn't speak, she didn't say a word, our overall plan is to have her voice be heard through ECF as loud as possible," says Neville.

"Jessica fought to be here and she had the strongest heartbeat. So we want to make sure that that love is put into action, giving back, making the community a better place," adds Carisa.

From Lures to Legislation

Kirsten Letendre's Métis journey of stewardship and self-discovery



irsten Letendre remembers her proudest fishing moment. She was six years old, standing on the banks of Lac Ste. Anne, wielding a bright pink Barbie fishing rod. The line tugged, the reel spun, and suddenly, the lake offered up her first catch. "It was this plastic toy rod," she laughs. "But it worked! I've been fishing my whole life, but that one was special."

Letendre is a proud seventh-generation Lac Ste. Anne Métis woman with deep family roots in the community. Her greatgrandfather was a commercial fisherman, and her father learned the trade as a boy. "I grew up just like that — always outside, camping, fishing, harvesting," she says. "All my memories are on the land or the water."

Even though Métis culture wasn't something her family could celebrate openly due to racism in the region, their way of life was grounded in traditional knowledge. Her parents, she says, have always been her biggest cheerleaders, encouraging her curiosity and instilling a love and respect for nature.

Letendre's love for nature led her to pursue a Bachelor of Science in biology at



The BBMAs were established at Edmonton Community Foundation in 2001 by Orval Belcourt, Dr. Herb Belcourt and Georges Brosseau K.C. Since then, the BBMAs have given over 3,000 awards to Métis students throughout Alberta, distributing more than \$12 million to assist with their tuition expenses.

Today, the BBMAs remain one of the largest non-governmental sources of funding for Métis learners in Canada.

However, Letendre's journey wasn't without hurdles. In 2019, she fell seriously ill just before the semester started. Hospitalized twice and forced to withdraw from classes, she was terrified to contact the BBMAs. "I finally called Theresa Majeran with a shaky voice, explaining what happened and asking if I could defer my funding," Letendre says. "And she just said, 'You focus on feeling better. If you never give up, you never lose.' I've had those words on a sticky note on my computer ever since."

That break from school proved pivotal. Upon returning, she ran into a lab tech named Jill while carrying a bucket of fish guts for parasite research. Jill suggested she apply to the Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS). Letendre didn't get the first job — or the second. But she asked for feedback both times. Then, her future boss called to offer her a six-month contract before it was even posted. "That was three years ago," she says. "Now I'm a full-time staff member and I've worked on every program at ALMS."

Letendre works with ALMS, a nonprofit focused on lake health in Alberta. Acting as "connective tissue," ALMS bridges citizens, government and organizations to monitor water quality and promote community stewardship.

She is also an approved harvester with the Otipemisiwak Métis Government within >







The 2025 BBMA celebration and sash ceremony is September 20, 2025, at the Edmonton Inn and Conference Center. Details at bbma.ca

"And maybe one day, I'll have the eighth generation of Letendres growing up on these lands and waters, carrying it all forward."

- Kirsten Letendre

Alberta, helping lead cultural harvesting workshops for families at Pigeon Lake. As the only woman on her team, she began speaking about the roles of Métis matriarchs — starting with a five-minute talk that evolved into full webinars.

Her advocacy brought her to Ottawa in 2023 for the Métis National Council's Youth Summit. The connections she made at the summit resulted in an invitation to help advise the Canada Water Agency on integrating Indigenous knowledge into the Canada Water Act. She later joined national water circles through Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak.

"It all connects — my great-grandparents, MacEwan, the BBMAs," she says. "Now I get to bring others to the table."

In spring 2025, Letendre was awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal for her contributions to water stewardship and Indigenous education — joining a cohort of mostly Elders and aunties. "I get to live the dream every single day," she says. "And maybe one day, I'll have the eighth generation of Letendres growing up on these lands and waters, carrying it all forward." _ecf-



A RUMBLING STOMACH is a barrier to learning. For an increasing number of students, this is a daily reality that doesn't just affect their focus but their overall well-being and academic success. With both childhood poverty and food insecurity in Edmonton at an all-time high, Top-ups for Tummies provides funding to Edmonton schools to increase access to nutritious food for students who need it most.

The program, launched by Edmonton Public Schools Foundation in 2024 and supported by a Community Grant from the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), operates on the idea that schools know their students best. "Top-ups is an initiative that allows schools to be responsive to the unique circumstances of the students they serve," explains Christine Simmons, a former principal who now works as a supervisor in Strategic Division Supports for Edmonton Public Schools. Top-ups for Tummies empowers schools to apply for funding to address gaps in their existing school nutrition programs and to offer timely access to nutritious food during the school day.

This flexible approach allows for a range of responsive solutions. Some schools use the funding for a fruit bowl in the office, while others provide cereal and milk for students who missed breakfast. A high school even pre-loaded gift cards for its cafeteria so students could purchase food alongside their peers without stigma. This innovative, equity-driven model is crucial because food insecurity doesn't look the same at schools across the city.

When basic needs like food are not met, students are not able to participate successfully in their learning. "We know they're not engaged, they're not focused, they have no energy," says Simmons, adding that this can also lead to a long-term disconnect from school. By providing access to healthy food at school, Top-ups for Tummies helps mitigate student hunger and allows them to focus on their learning.

ECF has been instrumental in getting the program off the ground. According to Catherine Bay, Acting >

Brain Food



Director at the Edmonton Public Schools Foundation, ECF's initial \$50,000 Community Grant provided the inaugural funding to launch the program. This seed



"Top-ups is an initiative that allows schools to be responsive to the unique circumstances of the students they serve."

- Christine Simmons

money generated significant excitement, drawing in new donors and expanding the program's reach. Bay emphasizes that this initiative demonstrates the power of partnership and how collectively our actions can strengthen community.

"Many of us at ECF are parents ourselves, so we understand just how vital nutritious food is for a child's growth and learning," Christelle Agahozo, ECF Student Awards Associate says. "It's been incredibly rewarding to see the difference this program is making in the lives of students."

In its first year, the program supported 79 schools and helped over 4,200 students. The feedback has

been overwhelmingly positive — Simmons recalls hearing about a family whose older child in junior high was giving their lunch to their younger elementary-aged siblings to ensure they weren't hungry at school during a time when the family was experiencing financial challenges.

"A teacher observed this student doing this, and told them about Top-ups for Tummies and how they could access fruit from the fruit bowl or a brown bag lunch if they felt hungry," recalls Simmons. "The student's mother ended up calling the teacher and was so overcome with emotion. There was no judgment, her kid just got help when they needed it."

A few months later, the family was back on their feet and out of gratitude for Top-ups for Tummies, the student's mother donated grocery gift cards to the school as a way of giving back and extending this support forward for other families who might need it.

As student enrollment and food insecurity continue to rise, the need for this kind of responsive, dignity-focused support is more critical than ever and Top-ups for Tummies will continue to be there to support schools.

Through the partnership between the Edmonton Public Schools Foundation and ECF, Top-ups for Tummies is not just feeding hungry kids, it's fueling their potential and building a more resilient community for all.

Listen. Share. Engage.









Wills Week. October 6-10.

Free expert advice on wills and estates. Online and in-person sessions.

Details at ecf.ca/wills-week.

