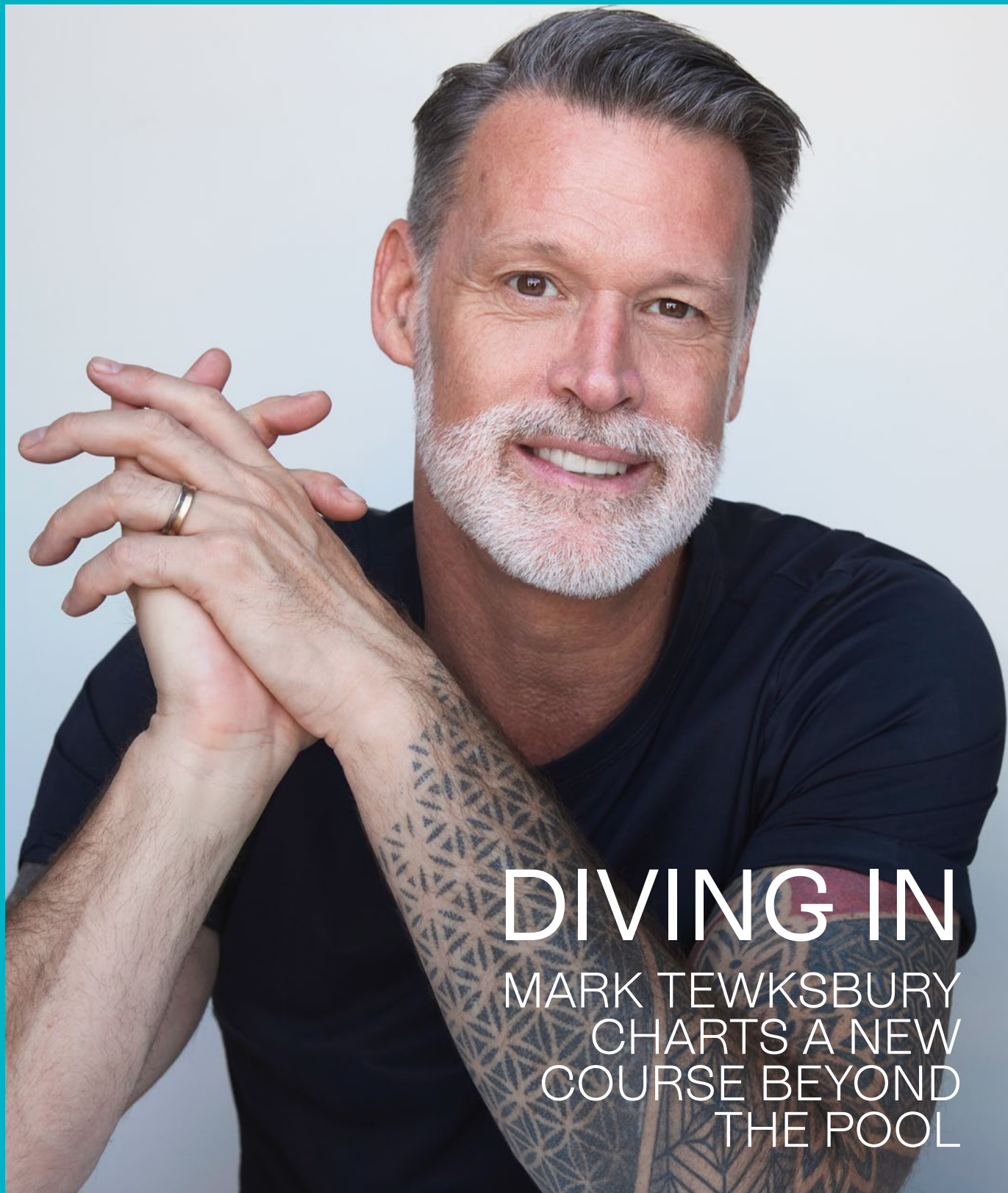


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FALL 2026



DIVING IN

MARK TEWKSBURY
CHARTS A NEW
COURSE BEYOND
THE POOL



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Stay connected on More online at ecf.ca

Together, we plan for tomorrow.



Megan Dart and
Murray Utas from
Fringe Theatre
Adventures

All charitable organizations need long-term financial support to continue delivering on their mission. This goal can feel out of reach — but it doesn't have to be.

Edmonton Community Foundation's (ECF) Endowment Sustainability Program helps staff and board members develop their organization's endowment and giving plan. Put more tools in your creative toolbox and expand your fund development possibilities.

THROUGH TRAINING AND COACHING, YOU WILL:

- Develop donor relationships
- Increase funding opportunities
- Learn about tax strategies and types of giving
- Level up your donor communications
- Ensure your organization is supported for generations

Fringe Theatre Adventures is one of many beloved organizations planning for the long-term with ECF's help.



Learn more about
**ECF's Endowment
Sustainability Program.**



Message from the CEO

What makes a city you truly love?

I REMEMBER BEING asked that question over 20 years ago, when urban theorist Peter Kageyama, author of *For the Love of Cities*, came to Edmonton.

What stuck with me then, and still does, is this: snow removal and construction delays will always irritate us. But it's the things that make a city vibrant, connected and curious that make us fall in love with it.

People might move to Edmonton because it's affordable, but they stay because of everything else this city offers — much of it made possible by a thriving arts scene.

Over the past few months, I've been reminded how lucky we are to live somewhere with such a rich, diverse arts community.

Last fall, I watched the Citadel Theatre bring Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* to the stage. This spring, I joined hundreds of women at the SkirtsAfire Festival, celebrating female artists and creators.

Edmontonians get world-class classical ballet through Alberta Ballet — celebrating its 60th anniversary this year — and bold, contemporary work through Ballet Edmonton.

For over 20 years, 5 Artists 1 Love has united Edmonton's Black communities through music, visual art, conversation and performance. This June's "Greatest Hits" concert was a party, but also a love letter to the city and a celebration of the African diaspora in Edmonton.

And in August, I was reminded

again how the arts bring us together through Folk Fest, a true Edmonton institution. I can't think of many experiences that rival a summer night under an Edmonton sky, surrounded by thousands of people sharing music and togetherness.

Barbara Poole, one of Edmonton Community Foundation's (ECF) founding donors, summed it up well. She said when you have a symphony, you have musicians. When you have musicians, you get quartets. And quartets start playing around the city, inspiring kids to love music too — like wildflower seeds, spreading beauty wherever they land.

The Edmonton Arts Council has been asking Edmontonians: Why does art matter? Because it connects us. Art doesn't just make Edmonton more livable — it makes it the city we love.

That's why arts funding remains one of ECF's top two funding areas.

Since 2001, ECF has helped 28 arts organizations secure \$43.3 million through the federal government's Canada Cultural Investment Fund. Donate to a participating organization by November 13 and help grow its endowment through this matching program. Explore all eligible groups at ecf.ca/news/ccif

Tina Thomas
Chief Executive Officer
Edmonton Community Foundation



ECF CEO Tina Thomas and Lt.-Gov. Salma Lakhani at the Shoe Project

Photo by Lynn Streeter Photography



SkirtsAfire Festival

Photo by Lindsey Tran



Edmonton Folk Music Festival



By **ANGEL DAHIYA**



Photo credit: Brianne Jang

(L to R) Martin Garber-Conrad, ECF CEO 2005-2022; Tina Thomas, current ECF CEO; Doug McNally, ECF CEO 1995-2005.

BORN READY

Investing in children today helps build healthier, safer communities for tomorrow

Doug McNally's understanding of what children need to thrive was shaped by decades of community leadership. From serving as Edmonton's police chief to leading Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) from 1995 to 2005, he saw the need for support to help children and families.

"One of the most stable predictors of criminality is poor school performance,"

he says. "If we provide early development opportunities to children, they have a greater chance of succeeding in school, greater chance of succeeding in life. And we also make our communities safer at the same time."

When McNally joined ECF, the Foundation had just two full-time staff and a handful of endowment funds. During his tenure, he helped build the organization into a force for community philanthropy. In 2024, he continued that legacy by establishing the McNally Fund for Children, supporting efforts that help children grow up in nurturing homes, and thrive in school and life.

Together with generous donors like McNally, ECF invested \$2.5 million through 59 grants in 2025 to support organizations helping children and families thrive. Through the Community-University Partnership at the University of Alberta, ECF continues to use research and community insights to guide grantmaking and direct resources where they can make the greatest impact.

For McNally, the true measure of success is the community future generations will inherit.

"Thirty years from now, we build no new prisons. There isn't a need, because we're doing the job in the community. We're preventing many of those children from having to enter the criminal justice system."

LISTEN UP!

Outdoors and indoors, weather and air quality shape everyone's health. And while you can't put out wildfires, you can take steps to improve the air quality in your home.

The Alberta Lung Association's Jamie Happy walks listeners through the basics of indoor air quality and outlines the simple steps everyone can take to create healthier spaces.



Scan to listen to



The Well Endowed Podcast





STAY IN THE LOOP

Curious about local impact?

Get inspiring stories delivered to your inbox.

Scan to sign up for our monthly newsletter.



COMMUNITY VOICES

Hear from the organizations turning your generosity into impact

“We are deeply grateful to ECF for supporting our Free to Play Edmonton: Out of School Time (OST) Outdoor Play Access and Capacity Hub project. This investment will help reduce barriers to outdoor play, strengthen frontline capacity and create more accessible, inclusive and child-led opportunities for children across Edmonton to play, connect and thrive.”

Jan Fox

Executive Director, Reach Edmonton Council for Safe Communities

“The Community Grant from ECF supporting Essentials for Success for teen parent families is truly a blessing. This support has created positive changes in the lives of teen parents and brought happiness to their faces. In a time of diminishing support, ECF’s funding is crucial to the families we serve.”

Jackie Fisher

Grants and Funds Administrator, Terra Centre



Photo supplied by Reach Edmonton Council for Safe Communities.

“Thanks to the support of the Furry Friends Fund through ECF, we can begin an important project to better understand the current state of animal welfare and address animal shelter capacity pressures. This project will spark conversations needed to strengthen the human-animal bond and build a more compassionate Alberta. We are grateful to rely on contributors like you to continue our mission.”

Leanne Niblock

Executive Director, Alberta SPCA

“We express our gratitude for your support to CNIB’s Tech Forward: Empowering Independence, through the ECF Community Grant Stream. Your support is helping people who are blind or have low vision build independence through life-changing accessible technology, personalized one-on-one support and greater inclusion across Edmonton. Thank you for helping us change what it means to be blind today.”

Carmen Dressler

Manager, Philanthropy, CNIB

“Your investment in our Stabilizing Culturally Grounded Programming for Indigenous seniors will help ensure Indigenous Elders and seniors continue to access programs that promote wellness, connection, cultural revitalization and healthy aging. We are grateful for ECF’s commitment to reconciliation, community wellness and the preservation of Indigenous cultures and traditions.”

Deborah Rose

Executive Director, Edmonton Aboriginal Seniors Centre



KEEPING EDMONTON ARTSY



Alberta Baroque Music Society

Since 1980, the Alberta Baroque Ensemble has brought 17th- and 18th-century music to Edmonton through historically informed performances and educational programming. Their endowment helps preserve this distinctive musical tradition, support future performances and inspire new generations of audiences.



Edmonton Symphony Society

Administering the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, the society has shaped Edmonton's cultural landscape for more than 75 years. From Juno Award-winning recordings to the renowned Davis Concert Organ, its legacy continues through an endowment that supports new orchestral music, Canadian artists and community programs.



Edmonton Folk Music Festival Society

Each summer, the Edmonton Folk Music Festival brings audiences together to experience music and community in Gallagher Park. The Forever Folk Fest Endowment helps keep ticket prices accessible while supporting the festival's future.

OUT N' ABOUT ECF in the community



Dave Chowne and Melisa Zapisocky from ECF's Community Impact team joined Cheryl Lux-Warholk, Sharon Acheson, Rebecca Mbanyele and Loa Oberhagemann at the **Spruce Grove and District Agricultural Society** on June 26. A Community Grant from ECF ensures photographs, documents and oral histories continue connecting generations through shared history.

ECF welcomed more than 500 donors, fund holders, charities and community partners to its **2026 Annual Luncheon** on June 11. CEO Tina Thomas and keynote speaker Mark Tewksbury inspired guests to imagine what's possible when generosity, leadership and community come together to create lasting change.



Discussions on the future of housing took centre stage at the **Housing Forward: 2026 Prairies Affordable Housing Summit** in May. Ryan Young, ED of Impact Investments from ECF joined Dr. Murtaza Haider, Dina Graser and leaders from across Canada to explore practical solutions for advancing accessible housing delivery across the prairies.

Since 2001, ECF has helped **28 arts organizations** secure **\$43.3 million** through the federal government's Canada Cultural Investment Fund. By donating to a participating organization by November 13, you can help grow its endowment through this matching program. These six organizations are among those participating and you can explore all eligible groups online.



Film & Video Arts Society of Alberta (FAVA)

As Alberta attracts blockbuster film projects, FAVA is helping filmmakers and the province's screen industry grow. FAVA's endowment ensures Alberta filmmakers have equipment, training and networking opportunities that keep Alberta on the map.



Fringe Theatre Adventures Society

Edmonton Fringe is the longest-running, largest Fringe Festival in North America, supporting 45,000 artists since 1982. Beyond the festival, the endowment ensures Edmonton remains a home for unconventional, boundary-pushing art, supporting artists who take creative risks and share new stories.



Shumka

From performing at a gala for Queen Elizabeth II to contributing to the opening ceremonies of the 1978 Commonwealth Games, the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers have been at the forefront of Canadian-Ukrainian culture for more than 65 years. Shumka's endowment helps shape the experience of Ukrainian dance today.



Serena Baneman, Grant Assistant, Melisa Zapisocky, Grants Associate and Oreva Adode, Grants Summer Student from ECF visited the **Ociciwan Contemporary Art Centre** exhibition **Miyo Wâhkôhtowin**, which showcased new work by nêhiyaw artist Arsene Joseph Alexander Arcand on July 3. ECF's support for a staff position helps the centre continue presenting Indigenous artists' work and cultural experiences.



ECF was proud to sponsor the second annual **FascinAsian Film Festival** in Edmonton, celebrating the talents of Pan-Asian filmmakers and artists. Sherilyn Trompetter, ECF's Manager of Equity Advancement, attended the opening reception to connect with members of the local arts community, including co-producer of the festival, Shawn Tse.



On May 14, conversations about estate planning and legacy building brought South Asian families together at **Wills & Wealth Transfer hosted by the Sifarish Network**. Sherilyn Trompetter, Manager of Equity Advancement at ECF, joined Yogesh Sheta and Indra Bains Ladha at the event.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Noteworthy dates and deadlines

There's plenty happening at ECF this fall! From grants and scholarships to community events and free learning opportunities, mark your calendar and explore all that ECF has to offer at ecf.ca.

Sep. 3

Applications open

Community Grant Info Session

Join ECF's community impact team for an in-person session to ask questions and explore funding ideas ahead of applying for a Community Grant.

Learn more at

ecf.ca/news/community-grant-sessions

Sep. 11

Applications close

Community Grants Application

Up to \$80,000 for registered charities.

Learn more at

ecf.ca/grants/community-grants

Sep. 26

Get tickets

Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards 25th Anniversary Celebration

Celebrate 25 years of the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards at the Edmonton Inn & Conference Centre (11834 Kingsway Ave.), recognizing a legacy of supporting Métis student success through more than \$12 million in education funding.

Visit bbma.ca for tickets and details.

Sep. 30

Applications close

Charmaine Letourneau Scholarship

Up to \$7,000 for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Albertans pursuing post-secondary education, helping advance learning, employment opportunities and independence.

Explore all student funding at

ecf.ca/student-awards

Sep. 30

Applications close

Al Maurer Awards

Up to \$3,000 for permanent public service employees pursuing a program of study leading to a recognized certificate, diploma, undergraduate or graduate degree, or professional designation.

Oct. 5-9

Register now

Willpower Wills Week

Join ECF's free Wills Week sessions with volunteer wills and estate lawyers to plan your future, protect loved ones and explore legacy giving.

Learn more at

ecf.ca/wills-week

Oct. 17

Attend

Alexandra M. Munn Memorial Concert

Join a celebration of music at All Saints' Anglican Cathedral (10035 103 St.) at 3 p.m. supporting the Alexandra M. Munn Scholarship Fund, which helps young classical musicians pursue their careers.

Learn more at

ecf.ca/munn-memorial-concert

Fall 2026

Join waitlist

Endowment Sustainability Program

Learn how to build long-term support for your charitable organization with guidance from ECF's Philanthropy and Donor Engagement team. Across five sessions, participants will develop the foundation of a sustainable endowment strategy.

Learn more at

ecf.ca/ESP

More than an Award

The Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards have helped thousands of Métis students fund their education — and build community

IN SEPTEMBER 2006, I walked across the stage at the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards (BBMA) Gala and received a Métis sash from Elder Marge Friedel.

Surrounded by other Métis students from across Alberta, I felt welcomed into a community. The BBMA's were only in their fifth year, but already the gala represented more than an awards presentation. The award founders — Dr. Herb Belcourt, Orval Belcourt and Georges Brosseau — were there to celebrate alongside us. Their vision of helping Métis Albertans achieve self-sufficiency through education had created this opportunity.

They believed that I, and every other student there, had the potential to make a difference. That kind of confidence was profound.

The financial support was a relief, helping remove a barrier to my education. But the impact

went beyond dollars. It wasn't just my friends and family rooting for me; it was this community I was becoming part of. I felt a sense of responsibility to make the most of what I had been given.

As I began my post-secondary studies in Calgary, earning a journalism diploma, I carried those feelings with me. I received another BBMA while pursuing a communications degree. In 2011, I joined other past recipients at the 10th anniversary BBMA gala.

By then, I had finished university and begun building my journalism career. I went on to work in newsrooms in Calgary and Edmonton, and freelance for publications including *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Globe and Mail*. Being Métis, and part of this community, has shaped the care and understanding I bring to every Indigenous story I tell.



Cailynn interviewing a police officer for the *Edmonton Journal* in 2014.

Photo credit: Ryan Jackson

When the BBMA's put out a call for volunteers for a new adjudication committee, I eagerly joined. I read applications from Métis students across Alberta — a role I've continued for 15 years, with a few pauses when my children were young.

The BBMA's were established at the Edmonton Community Foundation in 2001. Now, 25 years on, they're one of the largest non-governmental sources of Métis student funding in Canada. The awards have supported nearly 3,900 students with more than \$12 million.

Those remarkable numbers represent Métis people pursuing careers, strengthening their communities and returning to support the next generation.

Every spring, as a volunteer reviewer, I read students' stories. Just as people I had never met believed in me and welcomed me into this community, I get to extend that same belief and welcome to Métis students, who will walk across a stage and receive their own sash. *ecf*



Cailynn and her mother, Vivian Klingbeil, at the 2011 BBMA gala

IMPACT REPORT 2025

Building the community we imagine

Since 1989, Edmontonians have trusted ECF to grow their generosity into lasting change. That trust keeps compounding. Your support helps us invest in the people, ideas, and organizations shaping the community we imagine.



Investing in our community

From students to charitable organizations, our grants reach across Edmonton — funding the work that drives real, lasting change. Each grant reflects a shared commitment to building stronger, more connected communities — today and for generations to come.



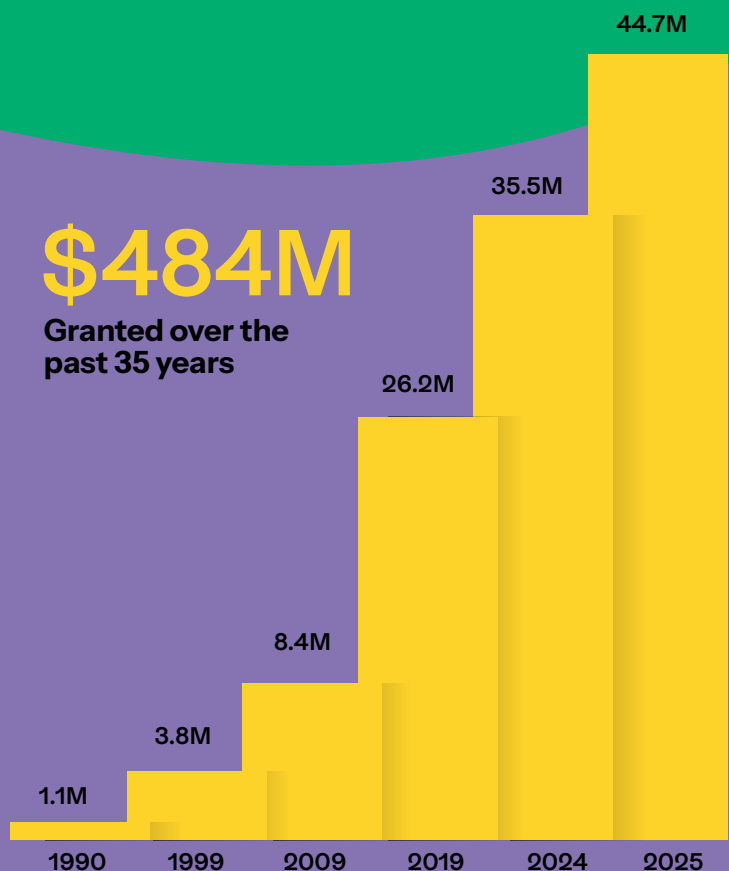
\$44.7M
Granted to 925 charities



\$1.7M
Awarded to 565 students

\$484M

Granted over the past 35 years



Funding the future

Strong stewardship ensures every dollar works harder for the community. Through careful management and long-term investment, we grow the resources entrusted to us — creating sustainable support for Edmonton's evolving needs.



9.65%

Return on investment
(2024: 14.6%)

8.2%

Annualized return
(since 1989)



0.62%

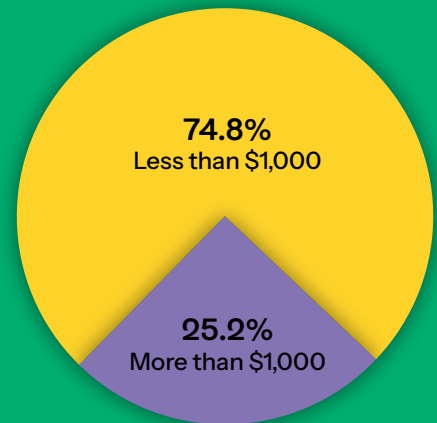
Operating costs
(2024: 0.62%)

The power of together

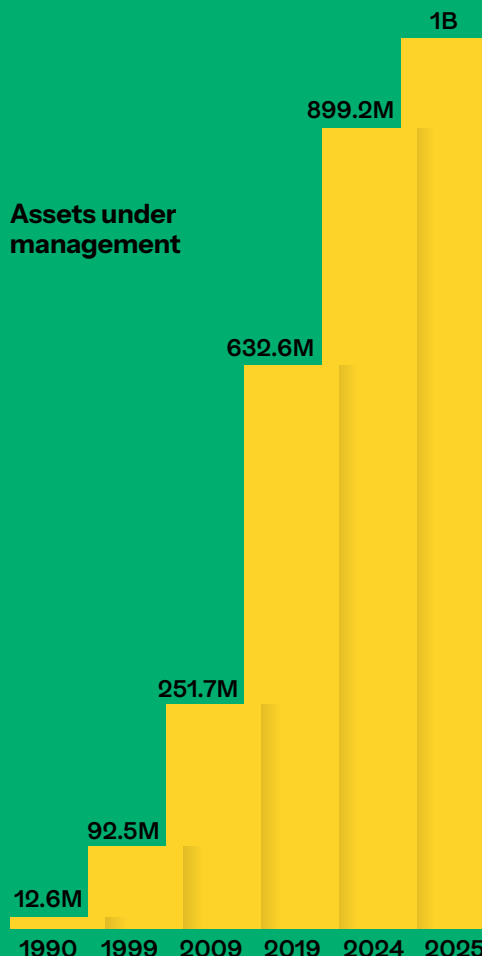
Community impact starts with participation. Every gift, every fund and every partnership reflect a shared belief in what's possible. Together, we are building momentum and deepening the reach of Edmontonians' generosity.

\$122.2M

Donations



Assets under management



1,856

Total Funds
(2024: 1,751)

105

New Funds (2025)
(2024: 115)

Explore our impact and read our full financial statements.

ecf.ca/impact



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LET THEM PLAY (OUTSIDE)

The Free to Play initiative helps more than a dozen Edmonton organizations get kids moving

By **ALYSSA NOEL** ILLUSTRATION **SCOTT CARMICHAEL**

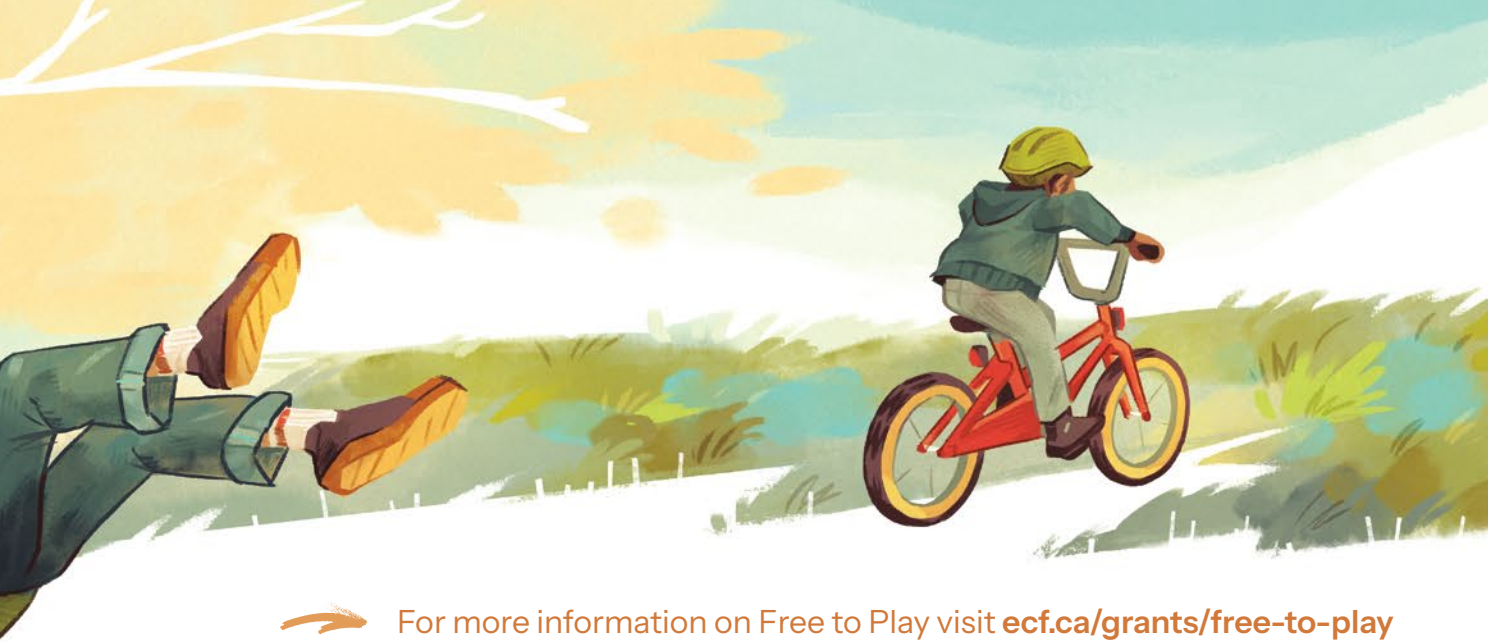
IT'S A PERFECT sunny day in early summer and a group of young children are toddling around the playground next to the Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre.

Some are pulling a wagon through the ample green space, others are crouched, examining bugs on the ground. There are no teachers or parents giving instructions or hovering, just kids independently exploring their environment.

This is what the Free to Play initiative is all about: connecting kids to the outdoors to engage in play, freedom and movement.

Community Foundations of Canada launched this national initiative with support from Waltons Trust and additional support from The Lawson Foundation and Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. Locally, the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) is providing an additional \$378,200 to support this work in grants for non-profits. The combined effort amounts to more than \$1.1 million in funding for 13 different projects in the Edmonton region.

"Strong communities begin with strong foundations in early childhood. Free to Play brings together philanthropy, community organizations and families around a shared understanding that giving children the freedom to play is an investment



➔ For more information on Free to Play visit ecf.ca/grants/free-to-play

in their lifelong health, learning and well-being,” Dave Chowne, Grants Associate at ECF says.

Norwood’s program, Free to Play Outdoors: Growing Healthy Children Through Unstructured Play, is one of them. The year-round outdoor play group allows children under six years old time to engage with unstructured play — and gives parents an opportunity to attend workshops and learn more about the value of outdoor, risky play.

“They come in and learn about the importance of unstructured play,” says Dimple Buksh from the centre. “One of the things we understand is that families come here from different countries and they might not necessarily know how to get ready and prepare for weather over here. That’s also taken into account.”

In June, the 2026 recipients gathered inside the Norwood Centre to share how they allocated their grant money and offer up ideas and support. Although not every participating organization is focused on child and family services, many have found ways of incorporating play — showing just how powerful and impactful outdoor play can be.

Fringe Theatre Adventures Society, for example, used its grant to expand the

outdoor play space they run during the Fringe Festival. It includes free, artist- and child-led outdoor play experiences.

“We wish it wasn’t the best-kept secret of the festival,” says Erin Voaklander, development director with the society. “We want more people to know this is a place where their children and their family can experience creativity and artistry completely for free. A big part of the project is outreach and another big part is assessing accessibility.”

Other grant recipients this year include the Ben Calf Robe Society for its Free to Play on the Land program, which operates week-long cultural camps for Indigenous children to play, learn and connect to the land; the City of Fort Saskatchewan for its Community Sheep Shack, bringing outdoor play opportunities to various parks; and Sustainable Food Edmonton’s McCauley Orchard Play Project, adding child-led play sessions and seasonal events to its orchard’s offerings.

The value of outdoor play has been a hot topic of conversation in recent years — in part, because of the rise of screens at home and in schools. Currently, less than 40 per cent of Canadian children are getting the recommended amount of daily physical activity levels.

Child development experts, meanwhile, have highlighted risky play, whether that’s climbing a tree or navigating a play structure, as a way for children to gain important developmental skills, as well as confidence in their abilities.

But it can be a tricky line for non-profits to toe when they have to consider factors like liability.

“How do you let them be free and how do we let them take risks without getting hurt?” Kathy Burgett, program director with Norwood, asked the gathered recipients.

For the answer, she quoted her colleague, Princeton Grant, a Family Educator at Norwood. “I only have to be safe as necessary,” she recalls. “Sometimes we’re so safe that children don’t actually get to do real risky play.” *ecf*



“Strong communities begin with strong foundations in early childhood. Free to Play brings together philanthropy, community organizations and families around a shared understanding that giving children the freedom to play is an investment in their lifelong health, learning and well-being”

— Dave Chowne



HOW MARK TEWKSBURY BUOYS SUCCESS

The Olympic gold medalist brings a message of authenticity, collaboration and collective effort that rings true to Edmonton Community Foundation's philosophy

By MIFI PURVIS, WITH FILES FROM TRUDY CALLAGHAN
Photos COLIN WAY

When we think of an Olympian, we might imagine an individual athlete on a podium: a personal best, a singular win. But Mark Tewksbury is quick to disavow the notion of elite sport as an individual pursuit. Instead, the highest achievements are the result of communities built through connection and a shared commitment.

Tewksbury has been a public figure since winning a silver medal in the pool as part of Canada's 4x100m medley relay team in the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. By the 1992 games in Barcelona, he was a linchpin on Team Canada, and he won the gold medal in backstroke. He retired from swimming that year, having won 21 national titles, set seven world records, earned a handful of Olympic medals and appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. Tewksbury came out in the late 1990s.

An Olympian, public speaker — and now a Red Seal cook — Tewksbury still manages to create himself afresh, while working steadily as a community builder. It's why Edmonton Community Foundation chose him as a keynote speaker to address the organization's Annual Luncheon this past June. Tewksbury shared his thoughts in an interview. >



When you work with teams and encounter that ‘give up’ vibe, what do you do?

Working with a group of health-care professionals once, I took a step back and asked the room, “Wait a minute, we all agree we care about patients’ health, right? OK, there’s a common area here.” And that’s part of what community is about. You have to create a space where people feel comfortable enough to be themselves, and be yourself.

People notice the big things, like Olympic medals. What is the unifying aspect of incremental progress?

Improvement doesn’t go in a straight line. Sometimes that means I had the worst day ever, but at least I got it behind me. Incremental progress depends on how you motivate people, having a sense of pride in your work, feeling like you’re a part of something meaningful. As a leader, if you can ensure that people understand how they’re part of meaningful work, that goes a long way. Offer somebody positive feedback, watch what happens to them and what comes back to you.

What has sport taught you about community?

You don’t get paid to get up at 4:30 in the morning to go jump in a cold pool. You have to tap into passion and friendship. I loved the community part of swimming. Swimming is an individual/team sport because it’s impossible to swim for hours a day by yourself. You need a group to pull you through the workout. It’s hard. Eventually, somebody wins a title or breaks a record. I happened to be the one for my swim club that won an Olympic gold medal. But I started with 500 or 1,000 kids, and we all went through the same thing. And I couldn’t have done it without those people.

So this applies at elite levels, too?

Yes. At the first Olympics I was at, in Seoul in ’88, the Canadian Olympic team was not united. It showed, and we imploded. Barcelona was different, we were one unified Olympic team.

What does that say about life outside the pool?

People who are disbanded can unite around a common goal. I’ve been in situations where everyone was just looking after their self-interest. We get fooled into this idea that if we work with other people, we have to “give up” something as opposed to seeing how much we can gain.

How did your coming out story shape you as a leader and an advocate?

It has evolved over time, and I would call myself a reluctant advocate. I grew up in a time where my parents were very proper and conservative. You don’t talk about your private life in public, ever. And I didn’t enter this life thinking that I would speak about my story, or that sharing my story would be activism. Advocacy has been a good surprise because I didn’t see it happening. I had started public speaking before I came out, I’d been sharing my story in a fun way, and I had become a good storyteller. I just had neglected to tell that big part of my story. But being authentic proved empowering, and it lends itself to speaking up about injustice in other situations.

What advice do you have about moving forward when you just don't feel like getting out of bed?

Those days come. When you're receiving criticism publicly, it's hard to distance yourself. Some people are great at it. When I was *chef de mission* (at the 2012 Olympic games in London), I had to control how I showed up as a leader during that time. When you're doing good work, you've got a clear vision. Those are the things that keep leaders sleeping at night. If I go to bed knowing I did everything I could to align with the goals we've set, the purpose of organization and the culture we've committed to creating, that's important.

The word you often use is 'bold.'

Yeah, if people can rally around a common goal or purpose, one of those bold, out-of-the-box goals, it sparks a different way of thinking. Boldness is not just whimpering along and hoping that something works. It's having some guts, passion and belief. But boldness also lies in incremental gain. If you're checking your progress every five years, you're probably four years too late.

How does a leader get continuously better?

Great leaders possess self-reflection, perspective, openness, ability to see their mistakes and grow from them. I'm grateful to sport for teaching me that. It's a great skill to be open to critical feedback, or constructive feedback, not meant to insult or hurt feelings. But it's a skill. Great leadership is getting out of the way and helping people see their own challenges and gaps in a way that helps them grow and doesn't shut them down or make them feel stupid. Not everybody has the emotional intelligence to be able to help others grow. A great boss adapts to the personality of the teammates.



Public speaker and Red Seal cook, Mark Tewksbury

In the context of that winning mindset, speak to your leadership.

It starts with being courageous and doing things no one's done. Even if it goes contrary to the most logical way, it might turn out great. When I was swimming, that mindset made me innovate. I enlisted synchronized swimming coach Debbie Muir (now a lifelong friend) to help improve the underwater portion of my swim. I thought, "Who better than a synchronized swimmer to help with that?" That thinking was fantastic when I was competing, and in the years after. Leadership is about asking, "How can I be my best self?"

Tell me about your relatively new business.

My career has been in the world of public speaking and leadership, and that meant travel. I didn't want to

travel as much, so I needed to figure out a way to do what I was doing, but at home. I went to SAIT and became a Red Seal cook. Now I combine cooking, public speaking, leadership, all in one evening. It's a curated three-and-a-half-hour experience. It's called Mark Tewksbury's Inspirate Experience. And yeah, I love bringing people together.

What advice would you give to your 14-year-old self?

It's funny. I just gave a speech in Amsterdam, and I said if you had ever told 14-year-old Mark that he would be sharing his private life publicly, he would have said, "Never!" but here I am. I would say to 14-year-old Mark, "Never say never, and it's going to be OK. As hard as this is right now, this is your story you're going to share, and it's going to make a big impact." *ecf*

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

A Vested Interest in Community

Celebrating
30 years
of changing
lives with
service dogs

As far back as she can remember, Elisa Irlam dreamed of becoming a veterinarian, making a difference in the lives of animals and their families. And although she didn't end up going down the veterinary medicine route, she has dedicated more than 30 years of her life to helping people in a different way: by training highly skilled, specialized guide and assistance dogs through Dogs With Wings Assistance Dog Society.

"It's not really a career. It's a lifestyle," says Irlam. "I originally loved it for the dogs, because that's always been such a big part of my life. But once I met the people and saw what that dog could do for them, that was what really changed it in my heart."

Over the past 30 years, Dogs With Wings has trained more than 230 service dogs to help people across Western Canada. The dogs work in a wide variety of settings: from helping individuals with physical disabilities with day-to-day tasks, to providing support in public spaces like hospitals, courtrooms and schools.

"We have so many testimonials about just how much it changes people's lives," says Irlam. "It's not just the tasks they perform, it's the companionship. They do just such incredible work in whichever role they're in."

The Dogs With Wings flight path traces back to the early 1990s, when Irlam was offered the chance to travel to California to complete an immersive, six-month guide dog training program. Almost immediately, she was hooked.

"When I returned home to Edmonton, I realized how amazing this work was," she says. "It was just so rewarding. I wanted to learn more and do more."

That passion led Irlam to spend the next five years training in Ottawa with Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind. Eventually, she returned to Edmonton, and in May 1996 founded what was then called the Western Guide Dog Foundation along with another trainer. Over the years, the organization would undergo two more name changes to better reflect their growing and evolving programs, including training guide dogs for people with low or no vision, as well as assistance dogs to support people with mobility, mental health or other neurological conditions.

Today, Dogs With Wings trains mobility service dogs, dogs for people living with post-traumatic stress disorder, and facility service dogs, offering support and comfort in settings like child advocacy centres, health-care facilities and courtrooms. Every service dog is accredited by Assistance Dog International (ADI), guaranteeing a high standard of dog training, health and follow-up care.

"We are accredited by ADI, and every five years we have to go through reaccreditation. So that is a lot of work," explains Irlam. "There's many standards we must meet and follow." >





Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) plays a vital role in helping Dogs With Wings match highly trained, ADI-accredited service dogs with clients in need of a support animal. By providing nearly \$75,000 in funding to Dogs With Wings, ECF has supported the equivalent of nearly 15 litter sponsorships, providing health care, nutrition and early puppy development. In the bigger picture, that funding means Dogs With Wings can train more dogs to enter service, so more clients can live with greater independence and dignity, and feel safe and supported in doing so.

“Organizations like Dogs With Wings remind us that building a stronger community means investing in people and removing barriers to full participation,” says Tracey Gleason, Donor Grants Associate at ECF. “Every service dog represents greater independence, confidence and connection for someone who relies on that partnership every day, and we’re proud to help make more of those life-changing matches possible.”

A major investment in training

It takes a special kind of dog to complete Dogs With Wings’ rigorous two-year training program. Training can begin as early as just three days old, with activities to begin testing each dog’s temperament, intelligence and character.

“We have very high standards that

we have to meet, temperament-wise, health-wise, training-wise with the dogs. So as the puppies go through certain stages, we will have testing for them to see if they’re going to go on to the next level,” says Irlam.

At just eight weeks old, puppies are placed with a foster family who will guide them through the next 16 to 18 months of their training journey. These puppy raisers generously give their time to attend training classes and help the dogs master the basics of good house manners. They also introduce puppies to new environments, with trips on public transportation, visits to crowded shopping malls or unique environments like the zoo, to ensure the dogs remain calm in the presence of new stimuli.

For the volunteers, the round-the-clock hours and care put into each dog is a labour of love.

“Through all the tears we shed as volunteers when we have to let the dog go, seeing the client they’ve been matched with makes it all worthwhile,” explains Seanna Collins, a longtime volunteer and member of the Dogs With Wings board of directors. “I think those are the moments that keep our volunteers coming back — to see that success. To be able to say, ‘I helped raise that amazing dog. I had a hand in that, and now it’s changed a life.’ It’s priceless.”

Of course, not every dog makes it through the intensive training program. Irlam estimates that only about 30 to

40 per cent of the dogs who begin the process will end up as certified service dogs. Some of the dogs who don’t make it go on to be companion animals, who are not certified as service dogs, but are skilled enough to work with clients at home.

Others go on to be adopted as pets, or find work in other ways, like Iceman, the Edmonton Riverhawks bat dog.

“Even though Iceman wasn’t able to be vested, he was adopted by his puppy raisers, who had fallen in love with him. He’s still a working dog — he’s out in the community volunteering alongside his people for us,” Collins says. “They take part in inquiry-based school programs, where Iceman demonstrates the skills he learned while at Dogs With Wings,” says Collins. “A lot of our adopted dogs are what I like to call alumni. They still go out, and they still help us.”

The dedication and hours required to train each dog comes with a considerable price tag. Irlam estimates each successful service dog costs the organization at least \$50,000 to put through its first two years of training. Then, when dogs move onto their working roles, Dogs With Wings maintains ownership of them for their working life.

“We make sure to match our dogs with the people that need them the most. That’s why we only charge \$1 for our dogs, to ensure cost does not become a barrier.”

Maintaining that level of investment for hundreds of dogs is no easy feat. As a registered charity, Dogs With Wings relies on public donations, corporate sponsorships and the support of donors and organizations like ECF to continue making a difference.

“We don’t receive any sustainable government funding at all,” says Irlam. “So, it’s vital, it’s very beneficial to have community support from the Edmonton Community Foundation.”

After 30 years and hundreds of lives changed, Irlam remains as committed as ever to the cause of helping those in need, one four-legged companion at a time.

“We will continue to do our best and continue to service those who need us,” says Irlam. “Whatever is needed in the community, we will do that because our goal is to help people, and we get to do that with the amazing love of a dog.” *ecf*

“It’s not really a career. It’s a lifestyle.” — Elisa Irlam

A JOB WELL DONE

How Goodwill Industries of Alberta helps people with disabilities find meaningful work

By **CAITLIN HART**

FOR MANY PEOPLE, a job is just a fact of life. But for people with intellectual disabilities, something seemingly as simple as a retail job can be life changing.

Goodwill Industries of Alberta does more than operate thrift stores. Their stores are just one part of the organization's broader mission to connect people with disabilities to employment, whether in their stores, through partner organizations or with other businesses in the community. And this work has a major impact. The 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability revealed that 30.4 per cent of Canadians over the age of 15 living with a disability do not work, twice the percentage of those without disabilities who are not in the labour force. Inclusion Canada reports that people with intellectual disabilities face the highest rate of unemployment among all people with disabilities.

Through a PDD (persons with developmental disabilities) contract with the province, clients are referred to Goodwill Industries of Alberta's Career Connections program for help with every step of the job-hunting process, which is tailored to each individual. Some participants are fresh out of high school, and others are adults who

might already have a job, but are struggling with employers who don't understand their unique needs. This is why, each year, hundreds of participants go through the Career Connections job training programming. Goodwill also partners with organizations like Telus and Epcor to provide contract work and training opportunities for participants, creating meaningful pathways to employment.

Each participant works with a navigator to identify strengths and interests and then create a plan to help them get there. The program equips participants with the skills they need to succeed, and then connects them with employment which, as CEO Dale Monaghan says, is about so much more than a paycheck. It's about finding meaning, dignity and joy through the power of work.

"Our CEO says all the time that Career Connections is the heartbeat of Goodwill, and we are the reason why the stores exist," says Tracy Rickert, a community employment navigator with Goodwill.

For Career Connections graduate Adam O'Donnell, getting connected with Goodwill transformed his work life. He had been working in retail for an employer that was unwilling to make accommodations or >



“Our CEO says all the time that Career Connections is the heartbeat of Goodwill, and we are the reason why the stores exist.”

— Tracy Rickert

understand his disability. At Career Connections, he was matched with his community employment navigator, Rickert, to build up his employment skills and find a job that would suit his skills and interests. He also needed to land in a workplace where the employer was more accommodating. With Rickert and the Goodwill team's help, he found it. Today, he works for a car rental company and loves his job.

“It's a lot easier for me, and less stress and better for my overall mental and physical health,” he adds.

As Monaghan says, this program is critical for participants in the program who might be starting their very first job in their 40s. In her role, Rickert sees many participants right out of school looking for their first job, not knowing where to start. Goodwill helps set them on a path to success, sometimes with a job in Goodwill Industries of Alberta's many thrift stores, warehouses or the head office.

Another aspect of the program is sector-specific training, zeroing in on the skills participants need to land a job that speaks

to their interests and ambitions, whether it's WHMIS certification or developing computer skills.

Goodwill Industries of Alberta was supported with operating capital from Edmonton Community Foundation's Social Enterprise Fund (SEF), with three loans totalling \$2.7 million. SEF provides financing to social enterprises like Goodwill and other organizations that drive meaningful social change in their communities.

“Goodwill's success demonstrates exactly how social finance is designed to work,” says Ryan Young, Executive Director, Impact Investments with Edmonton Community Foundation. “The financing helped the organization scale its operations across the province, create more meaningful employment opportunities for Albertans with disabilities and strengthen its long-term sustainability.”

In 2025, Goodwill repaid those loans, meaning SEF can distribute funds to more organizations — increasing the impact of these loans.

The program has ripple effects in workplaces, too. As O'Donnell says, too often disability is seen as a barrier rather than a benefit. Rickert agrees.

“I think employers don't really understand the benefits sometimes to working with someone with a disability, like they can bring so much joy to a workplace, and their work ethic is like second to none,” she says.



Monaghan says, “Many employers have said ‘we’ve never hired a person with a disability. We didn’t want to take a chance’ and then they do and we help them to succeed.” But Goodwill’s role isn’t handholding. Helping clients gain independence is important, helping them find purpose and community through “the dignity of a job” as Monaghan frequently puts it.

Goodwill’s impact is only growing — this past summer, the organization opened a new facility. And while they’re expanding, the organization has stayed true to its mission: connecting people with the skills they need to live meaningful lives — and hopefully helping end some of the stigma against people with disabilities along the way.

“We all have different disabilities, and we all work in different ways, and there are ways for all of us to help and support companies,” says O’Donnell. He wants employers to understand that everybody is different, and to get to know the person instead of judging them. *ecf*



Photos MAT SIMPSON





The \$1 Billion Question

**Edmonton Community Foundation's
Manager of Investments takes a
closer look at the strategy behind its
\$1-billion portfolio**

By **SANKET KULKARNI**



IN OCTOBER 2025, Edmonton Community Foundation's (ECF) endowment surpassed \$1 billion for the first time. We knew the milestone was coming, and when the moment arrived, a real sense of pride rippled through the Foundation.

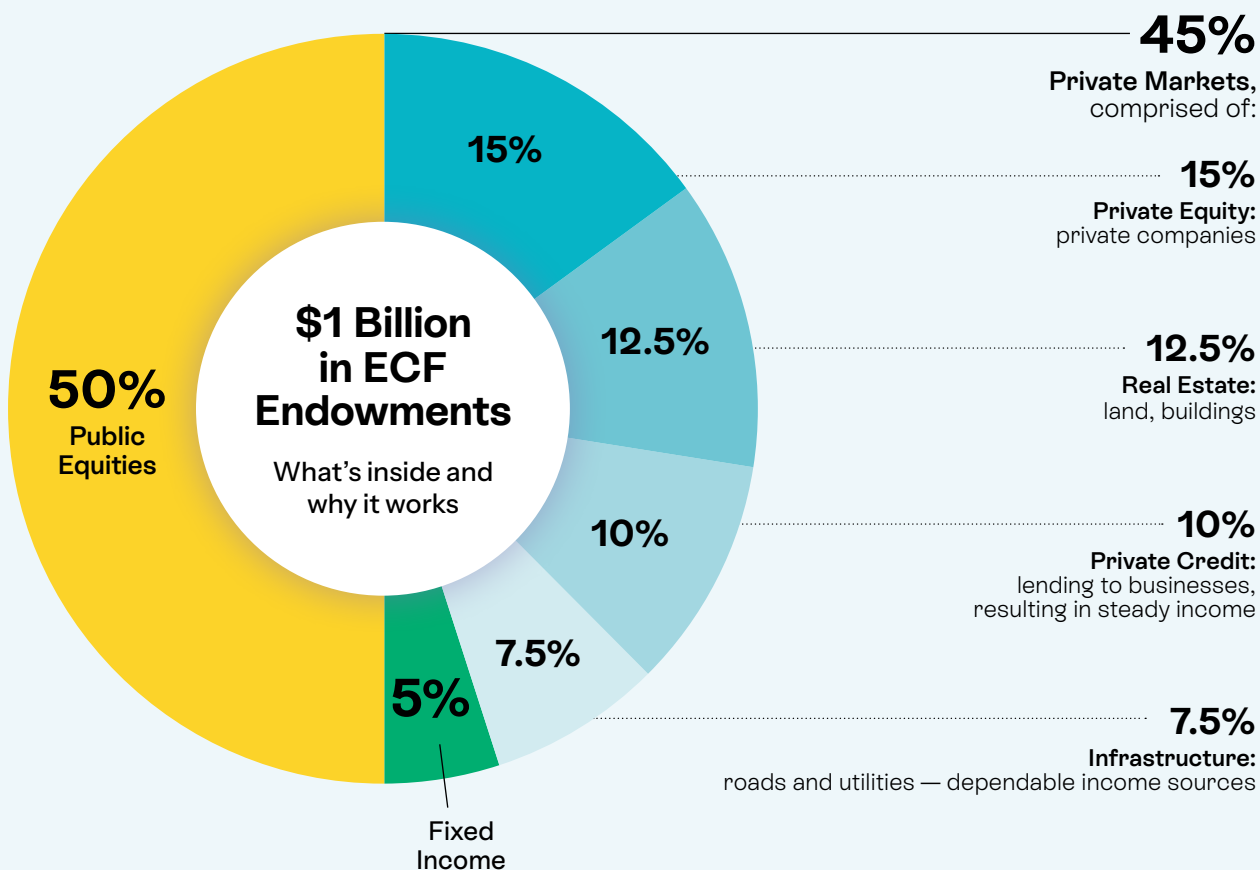
It also raised a question. What now? A billion dollars is an achievement. It's also a responsibility that grows with the number itself. Or, as the saying goes: with great power comes great responsibility. Our responsibility is to keep it growing while navigating the markets and its mood swings.

Let's start with where the billion came from. Nobody wrote a billion-dollar cheque. That amount comes from thousands of gifts since 1989 from everyday Edmontonians who care about their community. Currently, ECF oversees 1,856 funds and 74.8 per cent of donations to ECF last year were less than \$1,000. Our job is to steward that generosity so it keeps working for the community, forever.

Forever is a long time in markets. Long enough that crashes stop being a risk you plan around and become a certainty you plan for. Since 2000 alone, the U.S. stock market has crashed four times: down 49 per cent when the dot-com bubble burst, 57 per cent during the 2008 financial crisis, 34

"Because the portfolio doesn't crash when markets do, our granting doesn't either. It keeps climbing over the long run, which means more help reaching more communities, in exactly the years they need it most."

— Sanket Kulkarni



per cent during the pandemic, and 25 per cent in 2022. We can't dodge those crashes, but we can avoid the part that causes lasting damage: selling good assets at rock-bottom prices.

How do we do this? About half the endowment is in public markets, the typical stocks you can look up on your phone. Around 45 per cent is in private markets: real buildings collecting rent, energy and infrastructure assets; loans that help businesses grow; and ownership stakes in companies you won't find on any stock exchange. The remaining 5 per cent sits in fixed income.

We hold that 45 per cent in private markets because when public markets tumble, the two don't fall in lockstep. Private markets aren't traded every day, and their value rests on rents collected, interest earned and loans repaid, not on the market's mood that morning. Better still, that income keeps arriving through the storm and, along with our

fixed income sleeve, covers near-term needs, so we're never forced to sell good assets at bad prices.

ECF has one of the highest private market allocations among large Canadian community foundations and we can hold it because of what we are — a perpetual fund that never needs all of its money back on any given day. This means we can own assets that take years to pay off, and get paid extra for our patience.

Which brings us to the point of it all: granting. Because the portfolio doesn't crash when markets do, our granting doesn't either. It keeps climbing over the long run, which means more help reaching more communities, in exactly the years they need it most.

Soon, total granting since the founding of ECF will pass half a billion dollars. Nearly \$500 million given away, a billion still at work. That's the machine. And it never runs out. *ecf*

Strong Returns, Impact that Lasts



8.2%

annualized return
(since 1989)

\$484M

in granting
(since 1990)



Kayla Thompson, partner, Duncan Craig LLP

SUCCESSION STARTS NOW

Practical advice for business owners planning ahead

By **ANDREW PAUL**

FOR MANY ENTREPRENEURS, a business represents years, if not decades, of hard work, sacrifice and careful planning. Yet when it comes to planning for what happens next, business succession is often left until it's too late. Whether your goal is to pass your business to the next generation, sell it to new owners or simply protect the legacy you've built, having the right plan in place can make all the difference.

In this edition, Kayla Thompson, partner at Duncan Craig LLP and a Trust and Estate Practitioner (TEP), shares practical advice on when to begin succession planning, common pitfalls to avoid and how your business fits into your broader estate plan.



Why should business owners begin succession planning sooner rather than later?

The unfortunate reality is that time gets away from us. You don't want to wait until the cracks are already forming — whether that is in relation to your health, or relationships with families and business partners. Another key point is that most business succession strategies will be heavily tax focused and some strategies simply must be started years in advance. I have sadly seen too many tax savings opportunities lost entirely because the process started too late.

What's one of the biggest misconceptions you encounter about business succession planning?

The biggest misconception is believing that you must have all of the answers before sitting down with a professional. In truth, business succession planning is a process — one that will take time and may change as the years go by. It is okay to not know exactly where you want to go, and when you want to do it, before sitting down to talk. Think of that first meeting like a brainstorming session — your advisor will gather information and guide you to the next stage at your own pace.

How does a business succession plan fit into someone's overall estate and financial planning?

Business succession does not happen in a vacuum, and the goal is to have all of these areas working cohesively. For example, is your business being gifted to the next generation or being sold to a third party? Is there a Shareholders' Agreement in play? Do you have children working both inside and outside of the business, and how will your estate plan work to treat them equitably? From a financial perspective, does this plan leave you with enough to fund your retirement, and provide you with the cash flow you need at the right time? Do you have enough non-business assets to deal with the taxes that will be realized on death?

What are some of the most common mistakes business owners make when preparing to transition or exit their business?

Not having a Shareholders' Agreement is a big mistake. Even without business partners, a Shareholders' Agreement is a key tool in the transition to the next generation. Think of it as setting the rules in advance for the future players and ensuring that your estate plan is actually carried out. It is also worth its weight in gold when relationships become strained, which is a common occurrence during a business transition. A well-drafted Shareholders' Agreement is also a key component in ensuring that funds, especially life insurance, flow as they are supposed to, to the right people, at the right time.

What's one piece of advice you would give every business owner, regardless of the size of their business?

Choose your professional advisors carefully. It is worth making sure you have surrounded yourself with experts in their fields. Other than their subject matter expertise, the best advisors are those that are team-oriented and communicate well, because everyone will need to co-ordinate with each other to avoid becoming siloed. For example, if you are looking for a new lawyer, ask for a referral from your accountant or financial advisor — they will recommend someone they already work well with. *ecf*

Interested in learning more?

Edmonton Community Foundation's annual Wills Week returns October 5-9, offering 15 free information sessions on wills, estate planning and charitable giving, presented by leading legal and financial professionals from across Edmonton.

Visit ecf.ca/wills-week/ for more details.



BECAUSE IT'S ART

Create a living memory through an endowment that gives forever

HE WAS A young man with an outsized impact on the art world, an artist with a great sense of humour and an irreverent taste whose legacy lives on in a memorial fund with Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF).

Mathieu Lefèvre had a lifelong obsession with art. He started drawing comics and writing skits as a young man, which grew into a passion for art. Later, he went on to become an internationally recognized artist with exhibits in Canada, the United States and Europe.

Roxanne Arsenault, director of artistic programming at Centre d'Art CAB in Montreal, knew him as a student. She describes a talented young artist, one who used art to criticise the system and how it works, employing humour to get his point across. She praised the intelligence, sharpness and wit in his work.

"The first time I met Mathieu, I was working at another artist-run centre. He was approaching different curators, asking them to give a fake testimony on how good an artist and how important an artist he was," says Arsenault. "I was kind of struck already at the get-go by his confidence, his humour, his boldness."

Arsenault called Mathieu's work irreverent, funny and bold, whether it was his paintings or his sculpture. She wasn't surprised that he became so in demand and that other galleries were picking up his work. She curated a retrospective show about Mathieu's work in 2015 at the Centre Clark in Montreal, where she was the co-director at the time.

Mathieu had a wicked sense of humour from a young age, a love of April Fool's Day and playing pranks. He was someone who made friends easily and found ways to connect with other people.

"If he walked into a room where he knew nobody, within five minutes everyone would be there around him and inviting him to come to their place or come to an event or whatever. He had that kind of charisma that people were attracted to him," says his mother Erika.

Mathieu lost his life in a tragic accident in New York City in 2011, where he was working as an artist full time. His parents continue to talk about his life and his art and fundraise to help other young artists live out their dreams.

"I felt we had to do something to keep his name alive," says his father, Alain. "Talking to some friends, we viewed what was possible and some friends recommended that we approach the Edmonton Community Foundation."

Mathieu's parents set up a memorial fund with ECF in 2015 to honour their son by providing emerging artists the opportunity to pursue their dreams like Mathieu did.

Through donations, fundraising and investment, the fund has increased almost 15 times its original amount.

Every year, two scholarships are awarded to students studying or intending to study visual arts at the École Secondaire Beaumont Composite High School and at the University of Quebec in Montreal, with almost \$12,000 in grants distributed since the fund's creation.

Mathieu Lefèvre used humour and derision to question the conventions and systems that govern society, particularly the art world. He was recognized by the contemporary art community as one of the most promising emerging artists in Canada.

"He's not here to advocate, to continue his career ... So our goal has been to make his name known. We're trying to do the best we can in getting his work known and having other people appreciate and laugh and enjoy the world of art of Mathieu Lefèvre," says Erika. *ecf*

Lead with purpose. Create a legacy.

A portrait of Jane Goldrup, a woman with long dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved button-down shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

JANE GOLDRUP,
FOUNDER OF
PURANA SKINCARE

Starting a corporate fund at Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) is a smart, meaningful way to show your company's commitment to community.

We'll help shape a giving strategy that reflects your values, energizes your team and supports the causes you care about most.

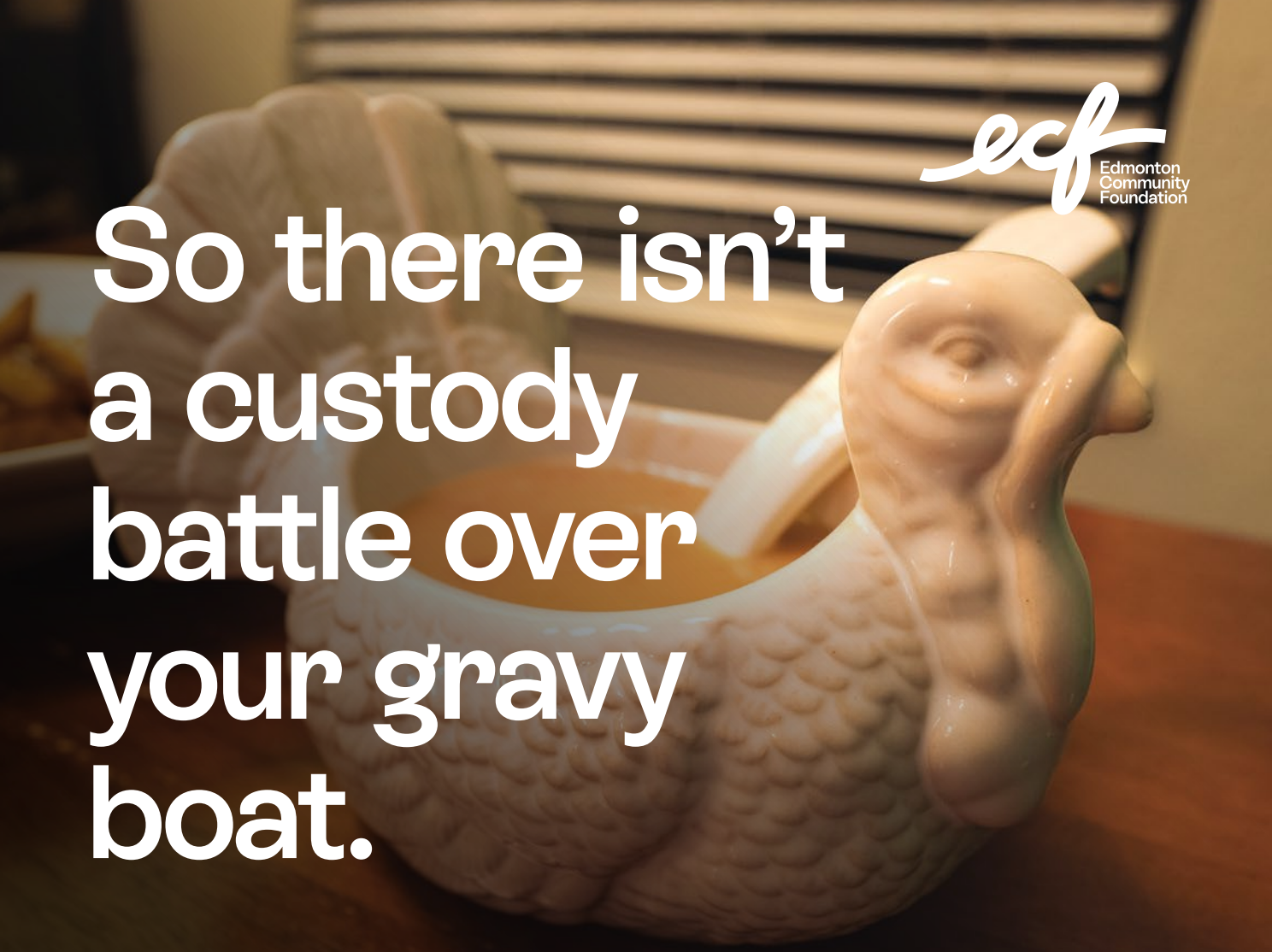
Let's build something lasting.

BENEFITS OF PARTNERING WITH ECF

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Free expert advice on wills and estates.
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