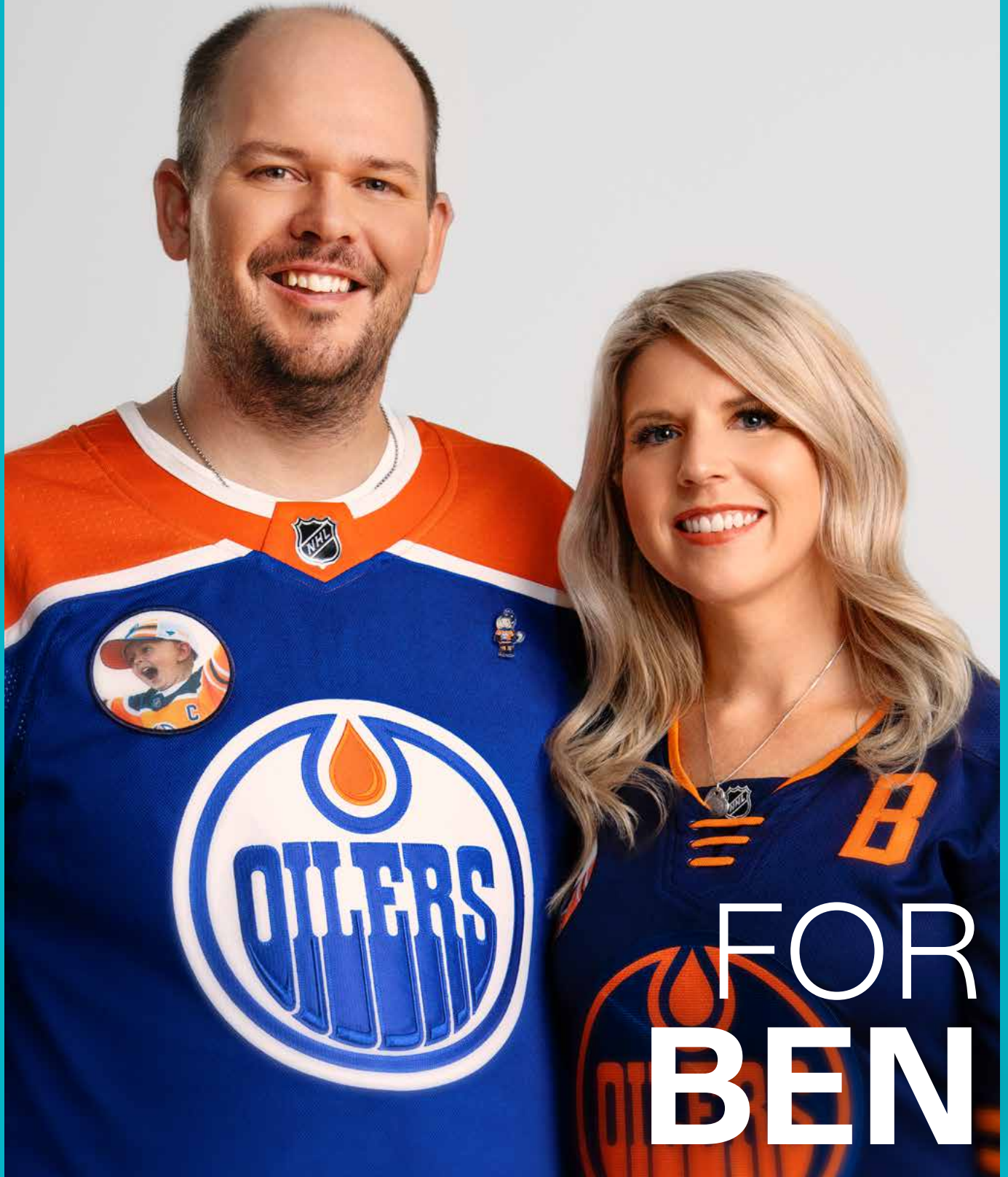


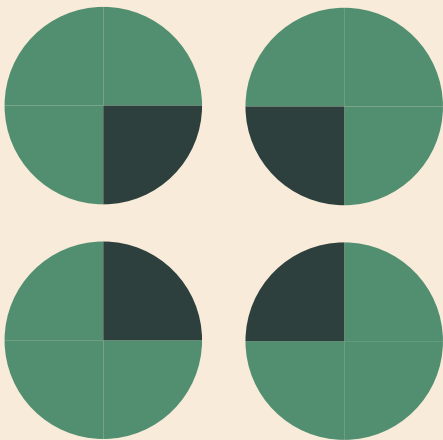
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Community
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WINTER 2024



Invested in Edmonton.



For over a decade, our Edmonton-based advisors have worked with the Edmonton Community Foundation to help our clients transform our intelligent investing strategies into charitable action.

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Charitable giving can be more than just a simple donation



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Message from the CEO

A Reimagined Purpose

WELCOME TO THE inaugural issue of *Together We Thrive*, Edmonton Community Foundation's (ECF) newly rebranded magazine. The new title, *Together We Thrive*, speaks to the very essence of what ECF believes: our city is at its strongest when we all contribute and grow together.

Formerly known as *Legacy in Action*, this publication has been a cornerstone of our storytelling since 2010, sharing 47 issues filled with the impactful work of charities, donors and community builders who are the heart of Edmonton. So, why the change?

Over the past eight months we've been talking with donors, community partners and other community builders to get a better perspective on what you think about ECF and the value we provide in greater Edmonton. Consistently you told us that we are "Edmonton's best kept secret", "A flexible and innovative funder" an organization where "community is at the centre" and that you "really wished more people knew who you (ECF) are". We agree with you!

We used this input to reimagine our purpose, vision, mission and values. Our new brand is the physical manifestation of this work — the design, images and words that better reflect who we are, what we do and the direction we hope to take, together.

We are more than a funder of the charitable sector or a partner for donors to leave a legacy. We exist because we are committed to enriching the lives of all our communities now and for generations. We are a catalyst for community well-being and vibrancy. And we will achieve this by being the partner of choice for all community builders, creating a better Edmonton through community generosity and collaboration.



As we celebrate our 35th anniversary, we are thrilled to share that, because of the generosity of Edmontonians, ECF has surpassed \$400 million in granting and scholarships. We are proud of this milestone and the history that has brought us here. But we're just getting started.

Our new brand is laying the groundwork for big things to come. It is an inflection point fueled by a refreshed purpose, vision and mission and guided by our renewed set of values.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Together, we truly do thrive.

Tina Thomas
CEO, Edmonton Community Foundation



Helping Jasper Recover

A fund that began as a way to help Fort McMurray wildfire victims has expanded to help people across the province

By **Lisa Catterall** + Illustration by **Serena Tang**

“Government and insurance will rebuild bricks and mortar. We’re there to help rebuild the fabric of the community.”

— Noel Xavier

AFTER A WILDFIRE this summer destroyed nearly a third of the town’s structures, Jasper has come together to rebuild. And, although the process has only just begun, Edmontonians, through the Northern Alberta Resiliency Fund, will be supporting Jasperites every step of the way.

“I would hope that these dollars help to restore the community spirit of Jasper, and give folks the confidence that they have support from other communities, and that they’re not alone,” says Noel Xavier, Vice President, Philanthropy & Donor Engagement at Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF). “We are really one big community.”

The Fund was initially developed in 2016 to support Fort McMurray residents after wildfires tore through that community. In 2023, it was revived to help Albertans dealing with wildfires in Drayton Valley and Grande Prairie, and this year it’s being directed to aid Jasper. A key part of the latest activation of the fund is ECF’s collaboration with the Northwestern Alberta Foundation and the Banff Canmore Foundation. ECF is working with these foundations to identify key decision makers in their local communities to flow the funding to where it is needed most.

Each year, the money raised through the Northern Alberta Resiliency Fund goes directly to the communities that need it. In 2024, ECF matched donations to the fund up to \$100,000, and less than two months after the fire, Edmontonians had already contributed more than \$160,000 to support their neighbours in the mountain town to the west.

While many Jasper residents and businesses will receive support from other levels of government and reimbursements through insurance companies, the Northern Alberta Resiliency Fund will help with community needs not covered by other sources.

“Government and insurance will rebuild bricks and mortar. We’re there to help rebuild the fabric of the community,” says Xavier.

“There are a lot of community projects and grassroots initiatives that happen everywhere, whether it be Jasper or Edmonton or anywhere. And so much of a community’s vibrancy comes down to those activities that really bring a community together.”

While much of ECF’s portfolio is centred on endowment funds, designed for giving over the long term, the Northern Alberta Resiliency Fund is a flow-through fund, intended for near-immediate impact.

“An endowment fund is invested forever so it’s really meant to be there for the long term to create sustainability into the future,” explains Xavier.

“However, in a situation where, say, a fire has torn through a community, that future sustainability really depends on more immediate needs. So we recognize that in a situation like a forest fire that’s out of control and has ravaged a community like Jasper, a long-term endowment fund is wonderful but we want to get dollars into the community faster, which is where the flow-through model comes in.”

With damages of the Jasper wildfire estimated at more than \$880 million by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, there will be no shortage of use for the more than \$260,000 raised to date.

And although Xavier hopes the Northern Alberta Resiliency Fund won’t be needed to help Alberta communities recover from natural disasters every year, the Fund will be there, set up and ready should the need arise again.

“It’s really about resiliency for our communities,” he says. “We’d love to think that there will be no more fires next summer, but the reality is, there probably will be. So now we’ve got this fund that’s going to stay up and running, and as needs emerge, we’ll be on the lookout and be on the ready to help our friends and families across Northern Alberta.” *ecf*

And Justice for All

YRAP offers alternatives to crime and punishment

By Lauren Kalinowski

WHEN SOMEONE UNDER the age of 18 faces criminal charges, they will go to the Youth and Family Court. If convicted, the court will sentence that person. This might mean that the court imposes a restriction on a youth who punched his friend on the bus, barring them from taking city transit, and puts them on probation.

That sounds like common sense. But that youth may have no way to get around without public transit. That person might not be able to get to school, to a job, to see friends, or to participate in out-of-school activities. That person can become isolated as their world becomes limited.

But with restorative justice, the process and outcome may be completely different. Restorative justice focuses on repairing the harms that are created within the community or with the victim.

"It's a very holistic approach to the charge or crime, and it essentially focuses on the youth repairing those harms however they kind of like see fit, of course, with our guidance and the way that differs from traditional criminal justice," says Aliana Kanji of the Youth Restorative Action Project (YRAP). The process looks at the entire picture: familial background, relationships, friends, community and culture.

YRAP facilitates the conversation, develops plans and assists youth with the process. It brings accountability back to the person who causes harm.

"For example, let's say there was a theft from a store, things we've done to repair that action have been baking cookies for people involved, writing apology letters and participating in community ... volunteering for the community it happened in," Kanji says.

Volunteers for YRAP must be under the age of 25 to maintain peer-to-peer relationships. They are often university students in sociology, criminology, or interested in law or youth work. The YRAP team engages with youth in the justice system who are currently aged 12-17, and they



have plans to expand the programming for young adults aged 18-24, who the justice system treats as adults. There are plans for a wider volunteer pool, recruited through social media and universities.

Outside legal procedure, which is the bread and butter work done by the organization, there's also outreach and mentorship.

"Sometimes we're dealing with at-risk kids who might not have community relationships or much family around," says Kanji. "We run programs to get people out to build community in fun, healthy and educational ways."

There is another side to YRAP. It could be working together in a mentorship capacity, building a resume or studying for a driver's test. There are drop-in group activities like bowling, mini golf, attending Edmonton Elks games or going to K-Days. If a person has issues with accessibility and transportation, YRAP has DIY activities. Thanks to funding from Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), everything YRAP does is free of charge and inclusive.

Turnover is a challenge, and YRAP provides education and training to all volunteers and staff to ensure a level of care and awareness in the work being done with their peers.

"We really appreciate our grantors like the Edmonton Community Foundation, for making it possible for us to continue doing the work that we're doing and expanding into more programming and more community members in Edmonton and the surrounding areas as well," says Kanji.

YRAP has received \$75,000 from ECF which has enabled them to hire six new staff this year. That includes a file coordinator, a drop in coordinator, and support in finance, development, volunteer coordination and programming. This will increase the number of files they can take on and expand the volunteer pool. Currently, there are nine staff and 56 volunteers.

YRAP projects the caseload for this year to be around 70 legal files. The organization plans to increase over the next year, potentially doubling the number of legal and probation files.

YRAP has a goal to put staff, a "court squad", right into courts to support youth who attend alone. That staff will share restorative justice alternatives available to individuals who may not be aware of YRAP. Over the next few years, the group hopes to support more youth and encourage them to use alternatives to the traditional judicial system, to move forward in a healthy, community-oriented way. *ecf*

FANTASTIC FOUR

This dance production is all about multiculturalism

By CAITLIN HART

FOUR IS A POWERFUL NUMBER. The four cardinal directions. The four elements. Its satisfying symmetry is found in science, math, religion and music.

The Hellenic-Canadian Community's production, *4: Dances of the World*, gets its name from the four cultures represented in the production: Chinese, Greek, Indian and Mexican, but it takes its meaning from the symbolism, too.

The four central dancers each represent a different local cultural dance group: Ballet Mexico Lindo, Shivamanohari School of Performing Arts, Shang de Tai Chi Praying Mantis and Dionysos Dancers.

The production tells the story of these four women, set against the backdrop of an airport — that universal setting of waiting, connection and departure. Through dance, the audience explores each woman's memories and reflections that led her to arrive at that airport.

"If I can give a little bit of a surprise, there is a part where the four leads are coming together, but you'll have to attend the performance to see the rest," says the production's artistic director, Kostas Koukouzikis, who also sits on the Hellenic-Canadian Community's board.

The performers represent not only different cultures, but different ages — women from 17 to 70. This, says Koukouzikis, was a happy accident. The opportunity to explore not only distinct cultures, but the different ages and phases of women's lives, offered an exciting window into human experience for Koukouzikis.

"This is why the arts are important, because they offer that fertile ground for us to see beyond the mundane," says Koukouzikis.

Like many cultural organizations, Edmonton's Hellenic-Canadian Community was hit hard by COVID-19. Coming out of the pandemic, it wanted to build bridges with other communities and create new connections, after the isolation of lockdowns. Thus, the seed of what became *4* was planted.

"In cultural groups, we tend to isolate. We tend to operate within our walls. But not here. This is a very different environment, a very different setting," explains Koukouzikis.



The performance is an opportunity for cultures to learn from each other and connect through dance. Dance is a potent form of expression and connection, one of the ways many of us connect to our own cultures, as well as others.

"It's also really enhanced by being able to share it with people who aren't part of the culture, because it's a new experience for them, and it's a new experience for our group, seeing the other cultures. And so it's really kind of creating something new out of things that are already existing and beautiful by putting them all together," says Charlotte Simmons from the Shang de Tai Chi Praying Mantis group.

The performance, set for Dec. 6, marks National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Although the performance focuses on dance, it also features voiceovers, giving voice to women who too often remain in the background.

"Sometimes we don't have the opportunity to



Images Supplied

highlight and celebrate them,” adds Koukouzikis. Women uphold our communities, he says, but too often, we take them for granted. Here, they are literally centre stage.

The performance is ultimately a call to reflect on what connects us all, across ages and cultures.

“No matter the colour of our skin, no matter our background, no matter our culture, we all experience life, death, love, childhood, family,” says Koukouzikis.

Receiving a \$10,000 grant from Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) wasn’t only a financial boon to the organization — it served as validation that it was on the right track, says Koukouzikis, that the work the group is doing matters to the Edmonton community.

With support from ECF, the Hellenic Canadian Community of Edmonton and Region was able to secure Triffo Theatre and hire technical staff to help mount the production. *ecf*



- ⋮ **4: *Dances of the World***
- ⋮ plays Dec. 6 at 7:30pm in the Triffo Theatre,
- ⋮ at MacEwan University.
- ⋮ Tickets are available on EventBrite.



← A subadult polar bear on a frozen lake in Hudson Bay west of Churchill, Manitoba waiting for the sea ice to freeze.

↓ Dynamic and highly variable polar bear habitat in Hudson Bay during the spring peak feeding period when the bears accumulate their critical fat stores.

Bear Necessities

A new fund helps preserve Arctic wildlife

By **Andrew Paul**



DIANNE JOHNSTONE HAS always felt drawn to the North. Her vacations haven't been to tropical beaches or sun-drenched resorts. They have been to snowy landscapes, mountain ranges and the vast, breathtaking Arctic.

"That's where I feel comfortable," she reflects.

Her travels, including a trip to the Arctic Circle last year, inspired something deeper: a desire to protect the unique and fragile Arctic environment and its most iconic inhabitant—the polar bear.

"We've always had an unbelievable appreciation for these majestic creatures," Dianne explains. "They're powerful, they are so amazingly adaptable to their surroundings. They are the most amazing things I've ever watched."

Dianne and her husband, Peter Wright, have turned their love for the Arctic into a lasting legacy by establishing the Johnstone-Wright Polar Bear Fund at Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF). The fund will support research, education and conservation efforts for Arctic wildlife. ▶

↓ Three adult males on the shores of Hudson Bay in November. At this time of year, with no competition for food or mates, males are social and seek the company of others.

This includes research like the work of Dr. Andrew Derocher, who has been studying polar bears for over 40 years.

Derocher is a professor of biological sciences at the University of Alberta with a deep commitment to understanding these iconic creatures.

“The bears almost kind of chose me,” he says.

From the shores of Hudson Bay to the heights of the Canadian Arctic, his work has helped shed light on the complex interplay between these animals and the changing climate.

“The bears almost kind of chose me.”

— Dr. Andrew Derocher

Polar bears, as Derocher explains, are uniquely adapted to life on the sea ice, relying on a diet that consists almost entirely of seal blubber.

“Polar bears are essentially fat vacuums,” he explains, highlighting the bears’ ability to consume up to 20 per cent of their own body mass in seal fat in a single meal. “They peel them open like a banana, and then scoop out that layer of icing, which is the blubber.”

This high-fat diet is essential for the bears’ survival, allowing them to store enough energy to endure long periods without food, especially when the sea ice melts, and hunting becomes impossible.

But the future of polar bears is precarious as their icy habitat melts faster than ever before. Derocher explains that the Arctic is warming three to four times faster than other parts of the world, leading to shorter hunting seasons and longer periods without food.



The delicate balance of life in the Arctic is being disrupted, and polar bears, despite their resilience, are feeling the effects. Some populations are already in decline, with lower reproductive and survival rates among the youngest and oldest bears.

Polar bears are listed as a species of special concern under Canada’s Species at Risk Act, and international assessments suggest that up to two-thirds of the global population could be lost by mid-century if current trends continue.

What makes Derocher’s research particularly compelling is the way it connects the plight of polar bears to broader environmental changes. “What happens in the Arctic doesn’t stay in the Arctic,” he warns, noting that polar bears are an accidental icon of climate change. Their struggles serve as an early warning for the global impacts of rising temperatures and disappearing sea ice. As polar bears face an uncertain future, other species, including the seals they rely on, are also at risk.

Derocher’s work, however, offers more than just a grim prognosis. His deep understanding of polar bears, from their specialized claws and unique migration patterns to their hybridization with grizzly bears, underscores their remarkable adaptability. Still, Derocher acknowledges that even these extraordinary animals have their limits. “They’re incredibly well adapted to the Arctic, but the rapid pace of change is pushing those adaptations to the brink.”

Derocher’s message is clear: the fate of polar bears is intertwined with the fate of the Arctic itself. As the ice melts and the climate warms, the challenges faced by polar bears today may soon be faced by many more species — and by humanity itself.

Dianne and Peter created the Johnstone-Wright Polar Bear Fund in April 2022, understanding the urgent need to act while there’s still time.

“We need to do more education. We need to do more research. We need to conserve, preserve,” Dianne says.

As of this year, the Johnstone-Wright Polar Bear Fund has surpassed \$20,000, making it ready to issue grants. For Dianne and Peter, the fund is a way to give back to their community and the world. “We are so ready to talk to the world and our network about how wonderful this fund has made us feel,” she shares. *ecf*



Marshall McAlister, CFA

ASK THE EXPERT

Instilling family values through **charitable giving**

By **MARSHALL MCALISTER**

CHARITABLE GIVING GOES beyond a financial transaction; it reflects a family's identity, values and the legacy they wish to create for future generations. What we see is: Many families give money away, and some give a lot. For those who have integrated philanthropy into their lives, discussing charitable giving has never been an awkward topic — it's a natural extension of conversations about family goals and the purpose of family assets.

EDMONTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (ECF): Why is it important for you, as an advisor, to discuss charitable giving with your clients?

MARSHALL MCALISTER (MM): Discussing charitable giving allows me to better understand my clients' core values and priorities. This insight enables me to make tailored recommendations regarding the amount and frequency of donations that align with their overall financial strategy.

ECF: When starting the conversation about philanthropy, what do you ask clients to consider?

MM: I begin by asking how they currently support the charitable sector. By identifying issues and causes that matter to them, that they regularly contribute to, we can often develop a long-term funding strategy that maximizes beneficial outcomes. At North Road, we love the idea of supporting important charities in perpetuity — beyond the lifetimes of our clients. This is where we can recommend clients work with ECF, providing a cost-effective platform for holding endowed funds.

ECF: How do you encourage clients to involve their families in conversations about philanthropy?

MM: It's not uncommon for parents to hesitate when it comes to fully disclosing their financial situation to their children. However, as our clients age, I often recommend, when appropriate, that they begin involving their children in understanding the broader financial picture.

Involving children (and even grandchildren) in the family's charitable decisions can open up opportunities to share knowledge across generations. These discussions create a space for educating the next generation about the importance of giving, fostering a legacy of philanthropy early on.

Starting the habit of giving earlier in life offers unique benefits. Not only do donors experience the joy of seeing the impact of their contributions firsthand, but they also build stronger connections with the causes they care about. For our clients, early engagement in giving creates an opportunity to involve loved ones in meaningful decisions, offering a personal legacy far more rewarding than waiting to give through an estate plan. Philanthropy during their lifetimes allows donors to actively witness the change they create while cultivating a lasting family culture of generosity.

ECF: What are the financial benefits of family philanthropy?

MM: While charitable giving offers tax benefits that can reduce the overall cost of a gift, there's no denying that it still comes at a cost. Whether giving cash, land or appreciated securities, philanthropy reduces wealth on the balance sheet, even after accounting for tax savings.

However, for those who have achieved financial security, the value of moving funds to those in need or supporting worthy causes far outweighs the cost. In my decades of experience, I've seen families make significant gifts, both directly and through charitable foundations, and I've yet to encounter a family that regretted their decision. The act of giving not only enriches communities but also solidifies a family's values and legacy for generations to come. *ecf*

Marshall McAlister is President, Portfolio Manager at North Road Investment Counsel. Earning a Bachelor of Commerce in Finance from the University of Alberta and holding the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA®) designation, he has spent more than 20 years providing wealth management services to high-net-worth clients.



FAMILY VALUES

Grandkids will steer the Sinns' charitable giving

By ECF Staff

GERALD AND BARBARA Sinn have found a unique and meaningful way to engage their grandchildren in charitable giving.

The couple has established individual endowment funds for their five grandchildren at Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF).

These funds allow the kids to make grants to local charities once they reach Grade 9. For Gerry and Barbara, this initiative is not just about financial support; it's about spending time with their grandchildren and instilling a strong sense of community values.

"It's cool. It's between us and them," Barbara says.

Two of their grandchildren, Andrea and Benjamin, have already taken up the challenge of deciding where to direct their grants from their funds.

In their grandparents' study, the family discussed various Edmonton-based charities that could use support. For Andrea, the choice was clear — she was passionate about the environment and chose to support the Edmonton & Area Land Trust, an organization dedicated to protecting natural areas and preserving biodiversity for future generations.

Benjamin's choice was more personal. Before his own autism diagnosis, he decided to support Children's Autism Services of Edmonton, a decision that took on even deeper meaning as his family learned more about living life with a family member on the spectrum.

Through these grants, both Andrea and Ben have become part of their grandparents' legacy of giving, learning valuable lessons about community responsibility and the impact they can make.

The endowment model ensures that their impact will continue to grow. When a fund is established at ECF, the money is invested. Every year, a portion of the value of the fund is distributed as grants to the community while the rest is re-invested — growing the size of the fund and enabling it to grant more and more each year.

Barbara and Gerry are pleased that these funds will endure long after they are gone, serving as a tool for their grandchildren to continue the tradition of philanthropy.

"These funds will sow the seeds for them to do things on their own," Barbara explains. She is proud to pass down the value of community service, something that has been central to her own life. Both she and Gerry spent years volunteering as Scout leaders and in their community league and church.

Gerry, a retired chartered accountant, credits his financial advisors at North Road Investment Counsel, Cary Williams and Marshall McAlister, for helping him and Barbara incorporate charitable giving into their financial plan. After attending ECF's annual luncheon, they were inspired by the potential of endowment funds and the long-term impact they could have on Edmonton's charitable community.

"We thought, that's maybe something we can do for our grandchildren," Gerry says. *ecf*

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 (ECF) can help ensure your charitable giving is set-up for long-term growth and greater impact.

You can set up an endowment fund that 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:



Step 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.

Step 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.

Step 3

It's time to make your gift. You can create your endowment with \$10,000 — donated all at once, or you can build to this granting threshold over time. This flexibility allows you, your family, staff or clients the opportunity to contribute to the fund in a meaningful way.

Step 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.
To learn more, visit ecf.ca



FUNDRAISING AFTER THE FLAMES

Hospitality workers unite to help fellow industry workers in “Edmonton’s backyard”

On July 22, during an already dry, hot summer afternoon, a fire started near the Jasper Transfer Station. Over the next hour, 30-kilometre-an-hour winds blew two southern fires north towards the station, turning them all into a single blaze with 50-metre flames that engulfed the town and turned a 6,000-plus hectare area into what’s become known as the Jasper Wildfire Complex.

Mary Bailey was in Edmonton, but she remembers it well.

“At first it was, ‘People are being asked to leave’ and then, boom — all we’re hearing and all we’re seeing is Jasper on fire,” she says.

Like many Edmontonians, Bailey has spent a lot of time in Jasper throughout her life, and the images of people fleeing the fire broke her heart. But once news broke that everyone made it out alive, the publisher and editor-in-chief of *The Tomato* magazine thought of the people she writes so often about: food and hospitality workers.

“Whether it’s a bartender, a server in a cafe or someone working on a raft crew, I think we’ve all experienced Jasper hospitality. Some of the workers are from there, or live there year-round, and some come from all over for work, but I just wondered: What’s happening to them?”

Instead of just wondering, Bailey got on the phone. She first called her friend Kaelin Whittaker, who owns Awn Kitchen in Edmonton. “I had called my brother, who is a firefighter ... and I asked him where [was] the best place to donate money so it would get in the hands of the people in Jasper,” Whittaker says. “He said, ‘adopt a business and donate directly to them and encourage other small businesses to do the same.’”

She and Bailey then called Butternut Tree and The Marc Co-owner Scott Downey ... who had already called Peter Keith from Meuwly’s. “We knew that if we were all thinking the same thing, that others in the hospitality industry would be too,” Bailey says. “If we could help mobilize them, we could help the workers from Jasper.”

They named themselves YEG Hospitality for Jasper, a group of people who, despite their overflowing sympathy and goodwill for their kitchen compatriots, knew they couldn’t do it alone.

After assembling their team, they made the next important call to Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF).

“I was actually just looking for advice, to get a read on what to do in this situation,” Bailey says. “So I sent an email, not knowing anyone there, and I got a call from [CEO] Tina [Thomas] that afternoon.” The two talked, and less than a week later, the group had

ECF’s new Jasper Hospitality Fund.

In turn, ECF reached out to their counterparts at the Banff Canmore Foundation (BCF) and the Northwestern Alberta Foundation (NAF) to collaborate.

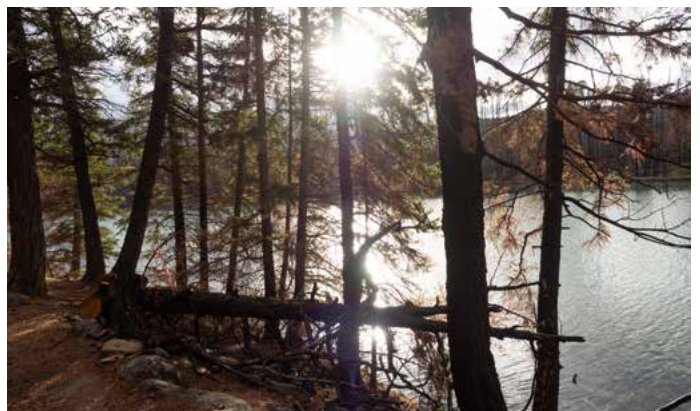
“There are over 200 community foundations in Canada,” says Noel Xavier, ECF’s VP of Philanthropy & Donor Engagement. “Each has local expertise to maximize impact, which is why we’re in discussions with BCF and NAF to determine where donations from the Jasper Hospitality Fund should go.”

ECF created an online giving page for YEG Hospitality for Jasper where people can donate and get information about hosting their own events to raise even more. This turned the group’s role from cold-calling fundraisers into managers coordinating the growing list of people wanting to help in their own ways.

“We immediately started getting text messages and emails saying ‘I want to do something. What can I do?’,” Keith says. “So if we have four different people who say, ‘I really want to host some kind of a wine fundraiser, we just put them in touch with each other and say, ‘Here you go — run with it.’ We wanted to become a platform that could just empower other groups to do their own initiatives and unite them under this cause.”

Within a few weeks of launch, Sundance Ski Shop held a beer-and-barbecue fundraiser. Vagabond Pop-Up donated sales from glasses of rosé and Jacek Chocolate Couture directed all profits from a single day of business to the fund. “We had so many events happening that we couldn’t even keep up with them,” Bailey says. “People weren’t necessarily letting us know right away, they were just kind of putting it up on their own and sending the Jasper Hospitality Fund the money afterward.”

The Canadian Restaurant Association made the biggest donation of \$10,000, with smaller donations bringing the total to about \$40,000 to date. All the money in the flow-through fund will be used to support Jasper hospitality workers, which means more donations will be needed going forward. You can donate anytime at yegfoodforjasper.ca. *ecf*



Mike and
Lea Stelter



Ben's Big Legacy

CANADA DOESN'T HAVE CANCER-FIGHTING PROTON THERAPY YET — BUT THAT MIGHT CHANGE THANKS TO THE BEN STELTER FOUNDATION

By **STEVEN SANDOR** Photos **AARON PEDERSEN**

Imagine being a parent to a critically ill child. There's a therapy out there that could improve the child's condition, but it's not available to you.

Sadly, it's something that befell Ben Stelter and his family.

Ben is well known to Edmontonians. Before passing away from brain cancer at the age of six, his friendship with many of the Edmonton Oilers became the stuff of legend. He was a fixture at games. He would not allow cancer to interfere with his passion for the team that he loved with all his heart.

But, Ben's mom and dad, Lea and Mike, knew there was new cancer-fighting technology out there — proton therapy — that could have helped their son.

"It would have benefitted Ben, but it wasn't available to him at the time," says Mike. "Canada is currently the only G8 country that doesn't have proton therapy available, which was shocking for us to figure out."

The Ben Stelter Foundation, aimed to help kids with cancer, was founded in his memory. And, one of the key initiatives is to raise the funds needed to bring proton therapy to Edmonton.

It's a project that will cost just under \$150 million. The Ben Stelter Foundation has partnered with Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) to establish an endowment

fund to support the project and help with the fundraising efforts.

It's a fitting legacy for Ben, who, despite having to fight a terrible fight at such a tender age, often put others ahead of himself.

"Ben had such a big heart," recalls Mike. "He was always more concerned about other people in the hospital, other kids, and wanting to make sure they were being taken care of. He wanted to do things like take his own money to buy things for the treasure chest at the hospital, so when a child was getting a needle or doing hard that day, they got to go to the treasure box. He wanted to make sure there was something cool for them there."

A cruel twist

Mike was meeting with partners, WestCan Proton Therapy and Edmonton Global, in 2023, to discuss the best ways to raise the funds needed to bring the cancer-fighting technology here. And, then fate intervened in the cruelest of ways.

In April of 2023, Mike was diagnosed with cancer. He had a tumour pushing against his spine. The best course of treatment? Proton therapy. He was sent to the United States.

"I got to see firsthand why it's so important for us to have it here."

Lea couldn't be with him the whole time, so Mike had to spend some of the time in the U.S. without family nearby. There was the paperwork ▶



**Ashif Mawji, the chair of
the Ben Stelter Foundation**

to get him over. And, even though Alberta Health covered the costs of the treatment and flights, all other costs were left up to the patient.

Mike says he knows of parents who have had to say no to the therapy because of the travel costs required — and that could be solved if it was available locally.

Ashif Mawji, the chair of the Ben Stelter Foundation, says the board has learned that proton therapy could be the best option for kids with cancer, but, sadly, because it can't be found in Canada, many families have to say no.

"It's not the treatment for them because the family has to uproot and go somewhere for eight weeks. You can't uproot a family on a whim."

So, what is proton therapy? It's a beam of cancer-killing radiation that is so fine, so precise, that it doesn't harm the nearby tissues and organs. For brain cancer, or a tumour that touches the spine, the accuracy of the treatment is so vital. It means the healthy areas can be left alone. We are coming a long way from traditional radiation therapy, where the hope is that the treatment kills the cancer before it kills the patient.

"Kids are obviously a lot more resilient," says Mawji. "If you get this early on and you are precise in the treatment, the chances of survival, of eradicating cancer in the body, are immense. So this is a must-have."

In proton therapy, there is little or no "exit dose" of radiation. The charged particles go into the tumour and stop there. They only release their energy where treatment is needed.

Mawji says the plan is to have the facility opened by the final quarter of 2027, or early in 2028. A site has been identified that's near the University of Alberta, so patients can have easy travel between the Stollery Children's Hospital, the Cross Cancer Institute and the new clinic.



“If you get this early on and you are precise in the treatment, the chances of survival, of eradicating cancer in the body, are immense. So this is a must-have.”

— Ashif Mawji

The plan is for the Edmonton site to be the first of a series of proton-therapy clinics named after Ben Stelter. After the Edmonton facility is opened, the focus will be on bringing the therapy to Ontario, Quebec and southern Alberta. The Edmonton site should be able to handle 400-450 patients per year.

The Edmonton facility will also double as a “best-in-class” research facility, promises Mawji, with partnerships with the Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute, the University of Alberta and the University of Pennsylvania, which is the global leader in proton-therapy medicine.

Canadian Gordon Baltzer is the chairman and CEO of WestCan, which is based in Florida, and he’s bullish about the chance to bring this life-saving technology back to his home country. He has been working with NHL Hall of Fame defenceman Denis Potvin, who worked in the Florida Panthers organization before settling into retirement, on the push to bring proton therapy to Canada.

“One of the things I talked to Denis about was that if a project in Canada is going to occur, and it’s going to be effective, sustainable and meet the needs of the community, it’s got to be community-based,” said Baltzer. “I told Denis that you led the Islanders against Gretzky’s Oilers for hockey supremacy in the ‘80s. Why don’t we look at bringing the hockey world together in battling a common foe in cancer?” >



“We’re both Canadians and had a passion for trying to make something happen.”

Edmonton Global’s reps introduced Baltzer to the Ben Stelter Foundation, and the Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation also got involved.

“We didn’t want to just bring this therapy to Canada, we want to lead,” says Baltzer.

Brain-cancer patients that are treated with traditional radiation therapy can suffer complications such as decreased cognitive and motor functions.

“This will allow us to spare that — and make sure their function and quality of life going forward is optimal,” says Baltzer. “Right now, it’s devastating that we see people suffer who don’t need to suffer, or who could be significantly helped. I think we’re in a Renaissance of cancer care. It used to be that a cancer diagnosis was one of the most gut-wrenching things a patient could be given. Today, it’s not that — there are so many effective therapies, and we can make it something you can treat and live with, but don’t succumb to. And proton is a big part of that.” *edf*

“We didn’t want to just bring this therapy to Canada, we want to lead.”

— Gordon Baltzer

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AGAIN!

The Art Gallery of Alberta celebrates its **100th anniversary** and the women who helped build it

By **Tom Ndekezi**

When a group of women involved in the Edmonton arts scene first met to discuss the idea of putting on an art exhibition, few would have imagined it one day becoming one of the country's largest art galleries.

Few, that is, outside of Art Association member Maud Bowman, who envisioned growing the exhibition of loaned artworks into a permanent, Edmonton-based collection. After the first exhibition attracted more than 2,000 visitors over three days to the Palm room of the Hotel Macdonald — Bowman organized the group under the banner of the Edmonton Museum of the Arts, and served as its first director. The only problem was that the Edmonton Museum of the Arts didn't have a museum, so while the group slowly put together a collection of local and international works, it had to find venues to host the exhibitions on an as-needed basis including libraries, car dealerships and other friendly spaces in the city. The Edmonton Arts Museum would exist for the next 30 years as part art gallery, part traveling show.

"[Maud] strongly felt that as the city was growing, it needed a place for arts and culture for the citizens of Edmonton," says Catherine Crowston, executive director and chief curator of the Art Gallery of Alberta. "Interestingly enough, as a woman art museum director at that time, she didn't get paid a salary. It was only, actually, until ▶





**“SHE STRONGLY FELT
THAT AS THE CITY
WAS GROWING, IT
NEEDED A PLACE FOR
ARTS AND CULTURE
FOR THE CITIZENS OF
EDMONTON”**

— Catherine Crowston



she retired and was replaced by a male director that there was a salaried position.”

Despite working against sexism, prejudice and the city’s growing but still-naïve understanding of the arts, Bowman’s influence was undeniable. Her mantle would later be taken up by other enterprising women, including Dorothy “Bobby” Dyde, whose curatorial reforms helped modernize a collection that is now over 6,500 works strong, and Abigail Condell, who donated the funds necessary to build the Art Gallery its first purpose-built space in the Arthur Blow Condell Memorial Building. That legacy even extends to Crowston, who assumed the role of chief curator in 1998 and eventually executive director in 2012. During her tenure, she has seen the gallery through a name change — the gallery rebranded as the Alberta Art Gallery in 2005 — the opening of a new building and, as of 2024, the Art Gallery of Alberta’s (AGA’s) 100-year anniversary.

“Those [women] were really the backbone of some of the activities that the gallery relies on regarding audience engagement and fund development, but they were doing it a lot of the time in a volunteer capacity,” Crowston says. “As we look through the history of the art galleries — with the AGA and probably with others across the country — those women make profound contributions to making sure that the art galleries survive, thrive and build community in the places in which they are.”

A lot has changed since the days of Bowman’s itinerant art museum, not to mention the Art Gallery of Alberta now occupying one of the most iconic buildings in all of Edmonton. A lot has also stayed the same however, including the gallery’s decades-long commitment to providing community art programming in the form of art lessons, open studios and outreach events.

“Artistic literacy is so important for a person to be well-rounded,” says local artist Lynn Malin, speaking of Art Gallery of Alberta’s role as a space for art education as well as art appreciation. “When you listen to music or read books or go to school, you learn things you wouldn’t necessarily learn anywhere else. But, in art, you learn so much that you don’t even realize you’re

learning. That's what is so interesting about it."

Malin has taught art classes at the AGA in addition to formerly working as an art teacher at Harry Ainlay High School. Her art ranges from sculptures to canvas paintings to, more recently, evocative landscapes painted onto polycarbonate lexan. Malin's work is currently on show as part of the AGA100, which is a series of exhibitions specially curated to celebrate the AGA's first century. It runs until spring 2025.

This year's centennial celebration has the AGA not just reflecting, but looking forward too. In fact, the AGA has recently teamed up with Edmonton Community Foundation to establish the AGA Always endowment fund. The AGA has already raised more than \$2 million in support of the \$20 million goal, which is meant to go to improving visitor experiences, renovations and much more.

"We tied the campaign to the anniversary because we thought it would be a moment for both celebration but also connection with a lot more people," says Crowston, who openly acknowledges the financial difficulties that have faced the AGA since the pandemic. "The idea of the endowment is to create long-term, sustainable funding for the gallery so that we're not so tied to the ebbs and flows, or in some cases, peaks and troughs of the economy and how it can impact non-profit organizations."

Crowston is confident that the Art Gallery of Alberta will not only be able to weather its current financial difficulties — with the help of the endowment, of course — but also adapt to whatever the next century of art might bring, even if it isn't quite what Maud Bowman would have had in mind.

"Art changes with the times," says Crowston. "But I do fundamentally believe that there will always be a place for handmade things that people craft with their hands and where you can feel the presence of the person in the made object. I hope that the art gallery is still here and engaging what would probably be a very kind of different population. I think one of the things we also have to think about is sustainability and what does a look like in a changing climate environment? Those are challenges we're all going to face as we go forward and think about our buildings and their operations." *ecf*





CIRCLE OF STRENGTH

EPCOR's contributions allow Boyle Street Community Services' King Thunderbird Centre to serve vulnerable Edmontonians for many years to come

By CAROLINE BARLOTT



JORDAN REINIGER, EXECUTIVE Director of Boyle Street Community Services, says that the organization's new building, *okimaw peyesew kamik*, which is Cree for King Thunderbird Centre, will be far more than simply a new home for the organization.

Since 1971, Boyle Street has been helping those experiencing homelessness and poverty in Edmonton. Up until last year, it did so in a decrepit old building — once a banana ripening plant — with a forever-flooding basement and spaces not adequate for the organization's purposes.

The old building was a prime example of the type of homes many charitable organizations often find themselves in — buildings simply left over in the community, says Reiniger.

So, while a new home is desperately needed, the beautiful, carbon-neutral building — designed with the input of Indigenous elders and the organization's clientele — will transform the delivery of services.

"I think for us, one of the driving forces behind this project has been the people that we serve that often are treated as trespassers in their own community," says Reiniger. "They aren't given the dignity and worth that we know they have. And so, we wanted to create a building that was beautiful, had significant investment from the community, as a way of saying: 'Hey, you're worth it. You matter enough to us as a community that we're going to build this beautiful building that's meant for you.'"

With a huge amount of community and governmental support, the Build with Boyle Campaign raised enough funds for the construction of the building. ▶



John Elford, President and CEO of EPCOR

Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) provided a grant from the beginning to enhance Boyle Street's capacity to launch the capital campaign, says Reiniger. And Boyle Street also knew an endowment fund — to ensure funds would continue past construction — was essential.

"It was advice we had gotten from friends in the community who have done other capital campaigns and said from the beginning, make sure you ... have a strategy for the endowment because you don't want to be in a position to have this beautiful building but don't have the funds to properly sustain the programs and services. So, we took that advice to heart," says Reiniger.

ECF put \$100,000 up for matching towards the fund from the beginning and, as more money comes in, it'll manage that fund and distribute the dividends on an annual basis.

One of the major corporate donors to the fund is EPCOR, who has supported Boyle Street through various gifts and matching programs over the past decade, especially during times of need.

Through the Heart + Soul Program, EPCOR matched all donations to the endowment fund up to \$250,000 until mid-October. However, when community donations exceeded that match partway through the campaign, EPCOR announced another \$125,000 in matching funds. Between the two, it brings their commitment to \$375,000. The endowment fund is open for donations at any time.

"Boyle Street has done a great job of raising money to support the construction of King Thunderbird Centre through their capital campaign. As an infrastructure operator, we know there's a great deal of importance in making sure that, along with maintaining infrastructure, you have the resources needed to keep services running," says John Elford, President and CEO of EPCOR. "Now that they have funding in place and construction underway, we really want to show our support and encourage others to help build the endowment so Boyle can continue to deliver critical programs and services for many years to come."

Elford says EPCOR wants to be part of the long-term solutions to challenges faced by Edmontonians. And he recognizes the building will help Boyle Street improve its services as it is designed specifically with the needs of vulnerable people in mind.

"They will be able to provide multiple layers of support, and multiple services out of the same facility," says Elford.

Reiniger says the difference in the design from the old building is so significant it allows the organization to deliver services in a much more efficient and supportive way. Smaller community spaces will be conducive to community building rather than simply having the cold feeling of an institution.

"A lot of people that we are serving really need more intensive wrap-around supports...so we designed the building with interdisciplinary case management at the core," says Reiniger. So, people will have access to a whole team of professionals: social workers, occupational therapists, and nurses. And they'll be able to access all the services in a comfortable space, so not only will they get the access but they'll also have that peer support."

Reiniger says there will also be a 38-unit apartment building on site, allowing staff to incorporate housing into the case management of some individuals.

All aspects of the building were carefully thought out with input from community members and Indigenous elders, which was key as over 75 per cent of Boyle Street's clientele are Indigenous.

Reiniger says one of the most important aspects that community members contributed was the need for space to do ceremony. In the past, if the organization wanted to hold a sweat lodge or ceremony, it had to go outside of the city, creating many barriers.

"I'm most looking forward to ... the day we can let our community members walk through the door, and see this beautiful space built with love for them. They'll see the features of the design they informed, all the things they talked about wanting to see in a building like this. We'll be able to do ceremony together. That full dream and vision can be realized," says Reiniger.

With the help of the community, Boyle Street's legacy endowment will provide what Boyle Street calls a circle of strength to ensure services will not just continue but thrive and improve in years to come. *ecf*



BIG VISION, BIGGER LEGACY

A new fund offers a legacy for BGCBigs staff, volunteers and youth

WITH OVER 45 years as an executive director of a not-for-profit, Liz O'Neill experienced many moments when she knew she was leading a truly exceptional group of people. But one stands out.

Money was tight and her organization was relying on bingo and casinos to keep the lights on.

"My question to staff was, 'Do we lay people off or do we all take a five per cent cut?' We took a vote," O'Neill recalls. "One hundred per cent of the staff said, 'We'll take the cut.' And nobody was laid off." She continues: "In my heart of hearts, I knew that day that we had created something different."

O'Neill retired from Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters (BGCBigs) of Edmonton & area at the end of August, having spent her career leading the organization through major expansion and great success helping at-risk youth. >

By **ELIZA BARLOW**
Photo **CURTIS COMEAU**

She has been helping others since childhood. She grew up in Ontario, the eldest daughter among 10 children, where working together to care for the family and the community was a way of life. She met her husband at a conference in Quebec City. Unable to decide where they should live, the couple flipped a coin one night at a Toronto Maple Leafs game, and O'Neill ended up making the move to Edmonton.

Her first job in Edmonton was as a social worker at the Yellowhead Youth Centre, where "wonderful youth taught me that many people, through no fault of their own, just end up in bad places. That set my life's work."

In 1979, she became the executive director of the Big Sisters Society of Edmonton. The organization had just two staff, served 26 children and had a budget of \$36,500.

Over the next few decades, O'Neill led the organization as it merged with Big Brothers of Edmonton, and later joined forces with Boys & Girls Clubs of Edmonton — in the largest-ever merger of its kind — to become BGCBigs in 2011.

Today, BGCBigs has 142 staff, serves 5,000 kids and has a budget of nearly \$11 million.

"Going to Big Sisters was kind of an extension of a big family — I never expected that the family would become so big," says O'Neill, looking back at when she first took the helm. "I'm privileged to have served with amazing people who all want to make Edmonton the best place it can be for kids."

O'Neill plans to spend her retirement travelling. It's a welcome respite from worrying "every day" about being a good employer, supporting volunteers, and getting services to more kids who need them.

She offers executive directors this advice: don't do it alone, and share the burden of your worries.

"It can be a lonely job, and you'll never solve them alone. At BGCBigs, we could say, 'We can worry about this together. Let's never lose the understanding that we are in it together.' That's the difference in the DNA."

O'Neill's contributions to youth and community have been recognized by BGCBigs through the new Liz O'Neill Award Fund, which was established at Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), whose board she was on for 12 years. The fund has raised nearly \$70,000, thanks in part to matching donations of \$15,000 from ECF and the Stollery Foundation, \$10,000 from the Flaman Foundation and \$5,000 from the Kinsmen Club of Edmonton.

"My question to staff was, 'Do we lay people off or do we all take a five per cent cut?' We took a vote. One hundred per cent of the staff said, 'We'll take the cut.' And nobody was laid off. In my heart of hearts, I knew that day that we had created something different."

— Liz O'Neill

The fund will give BGCBigs youth, staff and volunteers the opportunity to upgrade and develop the very skills and leadership qualities that O'Neill personified throughout her career.

O'Neill is humbled by the fund and hopes it inspires others to contribute to the BGCBigs cause.

"I could think of a lot of people in the community who deserve to have a fund in their name, who have done some pretty spectacular work. I don't feel that my contribution equals theirs," she says.

"But I am deeply honoured that people felt this was something they wanted to contribute to. It'll live forever — and that's pretty amazing, isn't it?" *ecf*



ON THE TOWN

Parties, conferences and
film premieres, oh my!

EDMONTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION'S (ECF) 2024 social calendar was buzzing with activity.

From our Annual Luncheon and Donor Appreciation Event to the inaugural Association of Grantmakers in Alberta conference and the premiere of *Pride vs. Prejudice: The Delwin Vriend Story*, 2024 was full of the community coming together.

Thank you to all our donors, grantees and community partners for joining us this year. When we work together, we thrive! *ecf*

1. The Ukrainian Shumka dancers perform at ECF's Annual Luncheon on June 20 at the Edmonton Expo Centre. Shumka holds an endowment fund at ECF.
2. The next generation of community builders were all smiles at ECF's Donor Appreciation event in May. ECF donors and their families spent the evening enjoying the Telus World of Science's Dinosaurs - The Exhibition.
3. Senator Kristopher Wells, Darrin Hagen, Sheila Greckol, Douglas Stollery and Supreme Court Justice Sheilah Martin took part in a panel discussion at the premiere of ECF's documentary *Pride vs. Prejudice: The Delwin Vriend Story*. The film debuted in Edmonton at the Rainbow Visions Film Festival on May 19.
4. Organizers and Métis community leaders celebrate the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards (BBMA) sash ceremony and award gala in Edmonton on September 21. Back row: Donna Bell (BBMA Panel Member), Betty Letendre (Elder), Doreen Burgum (Elder), Darlene Bouvier (BBMA Panel Member). Front row: Fred Keating (Emcee), Theresa Majeran, (BBMA Communications Manager), Orval Belcourt, (BBMA Founder), Dorothy Brosseau (Lawyer), Christie Ladouceur (Psychologist, BBMA Panel Member & Emcee).
5. Tareq Hadad, founder and CEO of Peace by Chocolate, delivers the keynote at ECF's Annual Luncheon, sharing his family's experience as Syrian refugees.
6. Riz Nathoo (Calgary Foundation), Tina Thomas (ECF), Kate Pedlow (HRJ Consulting) and Byron Chan (Alberta Law Foundation) at the first annual Association of Grantmakers in Alberta conference. The conference hosted delegates from 51 organizations working to strengthen the impact of grants across the province.





“

Edmonton Community Foundation has been an invaluable support to Bent Arrow over the years... we appreciate their support and kindness for our community!”

— **Murray Knutson,**
Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society

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