

FALL 2024

# PORTFOLIO



## The Jasper Place Wellness Centre Healing House

Human-centered housing design

The Jasper Place Wellness Centre (JPWC) is no stranger to helping create better futures for vulnerable populations. From providing affordable housing to creating jobs for individuals with barriers to employment, JPWC has touched the lives of thousands of Edmontonians since it was founded in 2006.

But in many ways, JPWC has only just begun.

One of the organization's latest initiatives, the Healing House, is poised to change the way supportive housing is offered in Edmonton.

From three houses in the Glenwood neighbourhood of west Edmonton, JPWC currently operates three "Healing Houses" as part of its Bridge Healing Transitional Accommodation Program. The program provides temporary housing for people who have been discharged from the

emergency departments of Edmonton hospitals, but have no other fixed address or housing to return to.

Residents are able to stay at the house for up to 30 days, or longer if they are in the process of being referred to other programs or services. While there, residents receive help from JPWC workers with things like finding and applying for income support, getting identification and securing other forms of housing or treatment, like clinical detox.

The Healing House model refers to the design of the building itself: the structure has a footprint which can fit on a standard single city lot, with 12 individual units in it. The units are intentionally small, forcing residents to spend time in the building's common spaces, and in a sense, encouraging them to form connections with one another. ►

### Money on a mission.

Put simply, the Social Enterprise Fund (SEF) is a loan fund. We invest in social entrepreneurs who want to make things better in the community and in the world. We provide patient capital at reasonable rates to help put dreams to work.

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“Research says if you can build communities of 8 to 12 adults, you’re going to have better outcomes for people, whether they’re dealing with addiction, or just needing more support,” says Taylor Soroka, co-founder of JPWC.

There are 36 units between the three houses in Glenwood, which are almost always full.

“We are about a year and a half into our pilot project of bridge healing at these sites, and we’re always at or above capacity,” says Soroka. “We receive people 24/7. Someone could leave in the morning, the unit gets cleaned and it could be filled by evening. There’s no break.”

The high demand hasn’t phased Soroka. In fact, it has her feeling optimistic, and somewhat impassioned about the housing model she has helped to develop. The Healing House model, she explains, could be used for a variety of purposes where residents would benefit from greater community connections, including housing for seniors, veterans or those recovering from addictions.

“One third of the building is common space, so from a conventional developer’s perspective, that’s a waste of money,” explains Soroka. “But for us, it’s about our residents. Often they experience comorbidities or have physical and mental health barriers. So building that community space in, in essence, just helps

set them up better for success.”

Many of the residents who end up in the bridge healing units have complex health needs and difficulties securing income or employment. Soroka says the majority of them have not accessed other housing support programs in Edmonton. Without the Healing House model, they could have continued to fall through the cracks, cycling in and out of emergency departments without getting more long-term support.

“About 70% of people who are coming through Bridge Healing have never been to other sites in Edmonton where they could

initial reports from Alberta Health Services show that people’s emergency department utilization does go down if they pass through Bridge Healing,” says Soroka.

“It does make sense, if someone has stable housing and they’re safe they might not need to turn around and go right back into the hospital again.”

Another benefit of the model, Soroka explains, is its low cost to build. Each unit costs less than \$200,000 to build, putting the total cost of the building’s construction (without land) at around \$2.2 million.

That affordability, she says, could be a game changer.

“If we were able to get a house and have no mortgage and just provide basic affordable housing, we could charge around \$400 per month in rent. So for someone on AISH or on a pension, that’s totally doable,” says Soroka.

“If we could get these units on the market, we

could actually really change the housing market in Edmonton.”

Plans are in the works to do just that. In August 2024, JPWC purchased a lot from the City of Edmonton for \$1, with the intention of building two more 12-unit buildings. Thanks to grant funding from the federal Housing Accelerator Fund, the new properties will serve as a proof of concept for the Healing House model, with plans in the works to develop another 20 buildings in the years to come. □

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**“Research says if you can build communities of 8 to 12 adults, you’re going to have better outcomes for people, whether they’re dealing with addiction, or just needing more support.”**

— Taylor Soroka

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be assessed for housing. So we’re serving a subset of people that are sick, and are really in need,” she says.

So far, the Bridge Healing model seems to be having a positive impact on the residents who have passed through its doors. It’s the positive outcome that Social Enterprise Fund was hoping for when it provided construction financing for the first three buildings.

“It’s still early, and the scale isn’t there because we only have these 36 beds, but



# Edmonton Movie Club

## Introducing Canadian audiences to Indian cinema

When Madhan Selvaraj moved to Edmonton as a student in 2003, the city was a much different place. The population was growing and becoming more diverse, but like many newcomers to the region, Selvaraj found it hard to stay connected with the culture and entertainment he was familiar with from back home in India.

"I couldn't watch films in my language, which is Tamil, here in Edmonton," he explains.

"I was in Toronto for a few years and the odd film would come to play at some independent theatres, but they'd never release them in Edmonton. It didn't make sense to play those films here, when you had to pay for transporting boxes of film reels only to get 100 people watching."

But as theatres moved away from using traditional film reels in favour of more easily transported digital versions, Selvaraj saw an opportunity. He wanted to start opening up Edmonton theatres and audiences to more international titles.

"The transition to digital really helped. It just broke the barrier, we were able to bring every single film much more easily," he says.



*"People always think of Bollywood, that's the flashy name, but there's much more. India is one of the world's largest producers of films, making 2,000 films per year."* — Madhan Selvaraj

In 2012, Selvaraj started the Edmonton Movie Club, a social enterprise focused on bringing films from India to the capital region. The goal was to let audiences in Edmonton explore topics like immigrant identity, while also shining a spotlight on the diversity of entertainment options coming out of India.

"Cinema is a great medium to educate the wider community about the diversity of Indian culture, because India on its own, it's a very diverse country," says Selvaraj.

"People always think of Bollywood, that's the flashy name, but there's much more. India is one of the world's largest producers of films, making 2,000 films per year."

Now, as the executive director of the Edmonton Movie Club, Selvaraj works to bring a selection of those films to Edmonton throughout the year. The Club also plays an important role in the annual India Film Festival of Alberta, and has helped to bring showings to other Canadian cities, like Halifax, Sydney, Toronto, Red Deer and Calgary.

"We actually broke the shackles in Canada. We were able to bring films no one heard of to the theatres," he says.

One of the most rewarding aspects of presenting Indian cinema to Canadian audiences, Selvaraj says, has been bringing people together and building a community of moviegoers.

"People from India, sometimes they don't get the opportunity to watch these movies, so they would lose interest. Now we've created that opportunity and developed that interest in watching films, together as a community," he says.

Over the past 12 years, the Edmonton Movie Club has developed strong connections with film producers in India, which has led to film premieres and celebrity appearances in Canada. Selvaraj has even helped to bring a Netflix production featuring Indian celebrities to film in Sherwood Park.

The Social Enterprise Fund (SEF) played an important role helping the Edmonton Movie Club build this foundation for Indian cinema in Canada. While the club receives grants from a range of sources including federal and municipal governments, financing from SEF allowed the club more financial stability throughout funding cycles.

Selvaraj is proud of the success the Edmonton Movie Club has seen to date, but he's also clear about improvements he'd like to see. The plan, he explains, is not to keep expanding in scope, but to fine-tune their operations and give audiences the chance to see more Indian cinema, year-round.

"We can't really get bigger right now. We've already reached that point," he laughs. "What we need to do is get more permanent staff so we can deliver programming on a continuous basis." □



# The Canadian Canoe Museum

Linking communities from coast to coast, through watercraft

From the outside, the Canadian Canoe Museum is an impressive sight. The two-storey, 65,000-square-foot museum resembles a canoe itself, nestled on a five-acre lakefront lot in Peterborough, Ontario.

"It's been a big journey for us to put our full collection under one roof," says Carolyn Hyslop, executive director of the museum. She's beaming with pride as she looks out over the museum's verdant lawn. "We wanted to basically build a campus on the water that allows us to connect people from the canoes or kayaks in the museum to on-water experiences."

Situated on the Traditional Territory of the Williams Treaties First Nations, the campus offers easy access to Little Lake and the Otonabee River. It's also connected to the Trans Canada Trail, meaning that visitors can enjoy a range of indoor or outdoor experiences.

"We wanted to create a museum that is a community hub, with lots of room for recreation," explains Hyslop.

"This location allows us to have all of our on-water outdoor experiences, while also having an indoor museum experience. So you can come by and have a cup of coffee with a friend, or go out for a walk in nature. There's a little something for everyone."



The museum itself offers visitors a multi-sensory, welcoming experience. Walking through the front doors, visitors enter a room wrapped in beautiful Canadian wood, with high ceilings and canoes suspended carefully from the ceiling. An authentic stone fireplace warms the museum's café, and the smell of cedar hangs in the air while resident builders and canoe makers bend planks.

With over 600 canoes and kayaks in its collection, the museum holds important links to the history of the land that is now called Canada. Hyslop notes that part of the motivation behind building the contemporary new museum was to put the collection under one roof, accessible to visitors, donors, researchers and anyone with an interest in watercraft to visit easily. One of the most important motivations behind building the museum, she says, was to create a space that respected relationships with Indigenous communities and encouraged acts of reconciliation.

"Many of these canoes and kayaks are of Indigenous origin, so it's important that they're accessible and available for Indigenous communities. That way, knowledge keepers or family members that are wanting to see their canoe, or maybe even have it returned, can do so," she says.

The collection takes visitors across Canada, through bodies of water from coast to coast. Wherever possible, the exhibits feature stories, photos and personal accounts from First Nations or Metis communities with connections to the watercraft.

"This is about the people behind all of the different items in our collection. We followed where they took us," explains Hyslop. "Some of them take us to residential schools, some of them take us to cultural renewal through canoe building. They go to so many different places and our role was to just follow that."

Just as the museum's collection features items from across Canada, support for the facility also came from across the country. The Social Enterprise Fund was just one of many organizations to support the national initiative.

"Whether you're in Winnipeg or Edmonton or Vancouver, or Victoria, there is a thriving canoe culture. It is about building a bigger network through this project. It's not just infrastructure," she says.

"And we're at the beginning of the story in some ways. We've now opened this facility, and from here we're finding new ways of working and engaging with communities across the country that we don't even fully imagine how they're going to go yet." □





# Magpie Books

## Keeping community at the heart of the book business

Sitting in the bright, airy storefront now known as Magpie Books, Julie King-Yerex breathes a sigh of relief. It's August 2024, and the past eight months have been a tumultuous ride, filled with uncertainty, optimism and plenty of elbow grease.

The location was previously home to another community bookstore, Glass Bookshop, which shut its doors in January 2024. Over the course of its existence, the independent bookstore had found its way into the hearts of many Edmontonians, and its closure left a particular hole in the bustling Ritchie neighbourhood.

For staff at Glass Bookshop, like Julie King-Yerex, the closure also brought about a sense of loss, not only as her employer, but for the city as a whole.



"Glass felt like a little hole in the city that was like a community space and niche bookstore. So when we announced that we were closing, oh my God seeing all the comments from people on Instagram and like all these messages about how much the space meant to people, it was just so much," she says.

But she was determined to keep the dream of that community space alive.

King-Yerex talked with Moriah Crocker, another of the booksellers who had worked with the store. The two agreed on the importance of having a locally owned, independent bookstore that focused on featuring marginalized voices, including BIPOC, queer and local or Canadian authors. They also saw the value in having a community

space where all were welcome.

So in the months that followed the closure, the pair got to work. They approached the Social Enterprise Fund to secure financing for their new venture, and spent the next several months working tirelessly, preparing for a new iteration of the shop to take over the Ritchie storefront.

"We really did everything ourselves because we wanted to save money. We had family building tables, and doing graphic design... I was here sanding and staining for days," King-Yerex laughs with a touch of exhaustion in her voice.

"I feel like a lot of folks when they're opening a shop or a business, they would do this over a year or more. And then there was us, getting this done in a matter of weeks."

By May, they were ready.

And like a phoenix rising from the ashes, a magpie was born. Magpie Books, to be precise.

The name, King-Yerex explains, initially came up as a joking homage to the popular video game *Stardew Valley*. But as she and Crocker talked about it, they realized the tongue-in-cheek reference to one of Edmonton's most iconic birds was a perfect fit.

"We were kind of joking about what kinds of names would be *Stardew-coded*," she laughs. "But then it just seemed like the perfect name. I love that they're kind of these feisty, maligned birds that are also kind of representative of the city."

Sitting behind the till, King-Yerex is the quintessential bookstore owner. As customers come in looking for specific books or recommendations in a certain genre, she's quick to provide assistance. It's part of the appeal of Magpie Books: they know their authors, they know their stock and they care about each customer.

"We're in a pretty small space, so we need to be super mindful of what we bring in, which means we really know every single book," she says.

But it's more than the books that make Magpie so special. King-Yerex and Crocker have sought to keep the shop as a community space, home to book clubs and community events like artist pop-ups and naloxone training sessions.

"We always have community first in mind. Obviously, we're a bookstore and we have to sell books to pay the bills. But what we try to do beyond bookselling is what makes it special," she says.

With those tumultuous first few months under her belt, King-Yerex is optimistic about Magpie's future. But she says she and Crocker aren't in any rush to expand or change their business model — instead, it's nesting time.

"We've signed a five-year lease for the space, so we're happy to settle in and just be here," she says. "It's time for us to set down roots here, for at least a little bit." □



# Teatro Live!

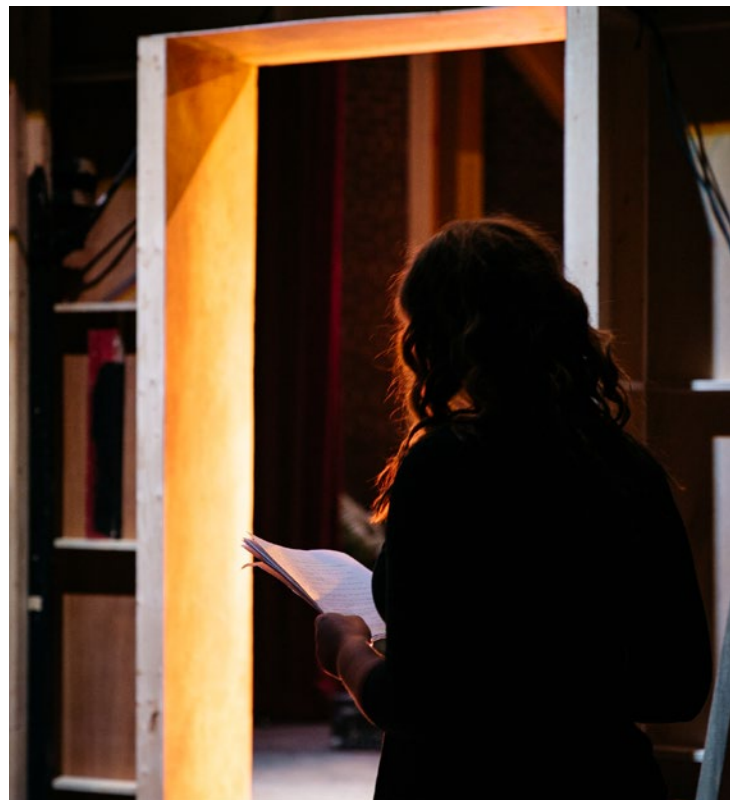
## Finding the creative route past the pandemic

For many businesses, 2020 was a difficult year. The pandemic took a toll on most industries, but was particularly hard for those dependent on in-person experiences, like the performing arts. For theatre companies like Edmonton's Teatro Live!, 2020 marked the beginning of a difficult few years, as they endured rounds of closing, reopening and limited audience capacity.

For Andrew MacDonald-Smith, it was an especially challenging period to take on the role of artistic director with Teatro Live!

"Looking back, that was really a tough time to start running a company," he laughs. "We were playing it day by day as to how long we would be shut down for. It was incredibly difficult."

At the onset of the pandemic, Teatro already had a long and storied history in Edmonton. For nearly forty years, the company has been a pillar in Edmonton's theatre scene, a place where audiences could reliably find witty, comedic entertainment, often centred around the works of playwright and co-founder Stewart Lemoine. The company was well-established, and looking forward at what the future might hold. ►





“We were in the midst of planning the next 40 years and considering what the future could be: how we could grow, how we could better serve our audiences and artists in the city,” says MacDonald-Smith.

“For the first 35 years of Teatro’s history, we were able to make plans and consider what worked and what didn’t, and how to move forward with our creativity. The arrival of the pandemic really cut down those plans and made us completely repurpose our organizational structure to figure out how the company could survive with this huge unknown looming over us.”

One of the resources the company was able to take advantage of to make it through those tough pandemic years was the federal government’s Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) loan program. When the loans were created in 2020, the funding was a welcome lifeline for organizations navigating the uncertainty of the pandemic. Nearly 900,000 small businesses and non-profits across Canada took out the short-term loans to help cover a variety of expenses, like payroll, rent, insurance or utilities.

The CEBA loans were interest-free and partially forgivable: for a \$60,000 loan, organizations were expected to pay back \$40,000, initially by a deadline in January 2022. That deadline was later extended to late 2023, and finally January 2024.

But as the deadline approached, organizations like Teatro! were still looking for ways to pay back the principal amount. The pandemic wasn’t over yet, and business certainly wasn’t back to normal.

“We really struggled, and had great hope that we would receive that relief of another year to come up with the funding, or come up with a significant fundraising campaign to help us pay that loan off,” he says.

Thankfully, decades of creative thinking came into play, and in December 2023, the company launched their Teatro 400 fundraising initiative. Within three weeks, Teatro had raised nearly one-quarter of the required repayment amount.

“We realized that we only need 400 patrons with only \$100 each to reach that forty thousand dollars. So it was the coming together of passionate arts supporters to help us kick the final pandemic-related pain out of our lives,” says MacDonald-Smith.

Building on that momentum, Teatro reached out to the Social Enterprise Fund to secure the last \$25,000 in financing to repay the loan before the January 2024 deadline. The Teatro 400 could then be collected to pay off the financing, without the rushed deadline of January 2024.

By June 9, 2024, thanks to the support of donors in Edmonton and around the world, the Teatro 400 was complete.

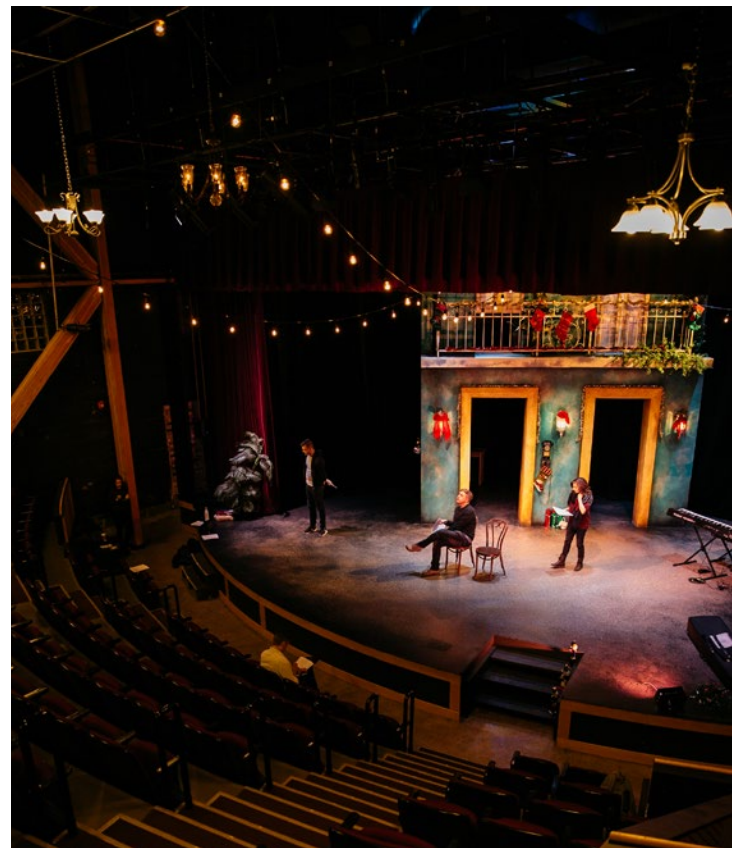
“It’s just been incredible to receive messages from people across the world and see how many lives Teatro has touched,” says MacDonald-Smith, adding that the campaign has helped to reinvigorate Teatro’s vision for the next forty years of the company.

“Over the past few years, we’ve been so hyper focused on what’s in front of us. You don’t always notice all the people who have their hand on your back behind you. So the Teatro 400 has really helped remind the company that what we’re doing is worthwhile.”

But in addition to acting as a reminder of the importance of Teatro’s work, the fundraising campaign has also freed MacDonald-Smith up to focus on the job he was initially brought on to do.

“As an artistic director, my job is to find new ways to bring new art and really fun comedies to the Edmonton community,” he says.

“To be able to return to that, and not be constantly problem-solving and focused on the challenges, is really exciting. Now we’re able to dream about what we can do for Edmonton again.” □





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# KJ Street Consulting

## Helping communities build better futures

As parents of three, Kim and Jason Street know full well the value of having safe, fun places for kids to play. For more than a decade, they've built a business helping schools and communities fundraise to build playgrounds and other large infrastructure projects which can often run in the six- to seven-figure range.

"We have a real love for community, so when someone needs a helping hand, we're big on that," says Kim.

The Streets came by their line of work through a series of difficult family circumstances. When their oldest son, Connor, suffered a sudden and unexpected brain injury and was hospitalized, Kim left her job as a professional fundraiser to focus on her family.

"I went into retirement because we weren't sure what was going to happen. We went from the Stollery to the Glenrose, and then through lots of therapy," she explains. But as Connor moved out of the hospital and came back home, Kim and Jason realized there was a lot of work to be done to adapt to their new normal.

"I wanted him to be the same as he was before the accident. I couldn't really wrap my head around it. I couldn't understand why things were so different, but his brain was really like pieces of puzzles he had to put back together. He had to relearn all those skills."

When Connor was ready to attend Elmwood Elementary School, Kim continued to worry about her son's progress. Eventually, her continued concern gained the attention of staff.

"They said, 'We need to give you a hobby,' and I said, I don't know how to do anything but raise money. That's all I know how to do," she explains. As luck would have it, that skill was in high demand, as the school was fundraising to build a new playground. After holding more than a hundred bake sales, the school had raised less than \$50,000.

They needed more than a million.

"So I said, all right, just give me a purpose and let's go," laughs Kim.

Over the next seven months, with help from the Streets, the school went on to raise over \$1.1 million dollars. The project was the start of what would eventually become KJ Street Consulting, a social enterprise founded by Kim and Jason, which would help communities secure grants and funding to build new playgrounds.

Over the years, KJ Street Consulting has gone on to help schools across Alberta, including in larger school districts like Edmonton Catholic, as well as smaller communities like Banff and Manning. They've also expanded into British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Yukon, with plans for further growth in the works.

But just as that growth into other jurisdictions was beginning, the pandemic hit.

"COVID kind of threw everything upside down," explains Kim. "Because in my mind, I thought, 'This will be over next month, next month, next month,' and then it lasted a really long time."

Thankfully, the company was able to turn to the Social Enterprise Fund to get through those difficult few months. SEF provided financing to cover operating capital during the most difficult parts of the pandemic. And as life returned to normal, KJ Street Consulting was able to focus on what they do best: bringing smiles to kids and communities.

"We're all about community. Jason and I don't want to ever steer away from that," says Kim.

"Yes, we're a small business and we have to make money, but we're invested in the communities we work in and we want to keep that as the main focus for us, front and centre." □



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*Collin Gallant, Taproot Edmonton, reprinted with permission.*

# How a bison head helped change the Pioneers Cabin into the Bison Lodge

The Northern Alberta Pioneers and Descendants Association has changed the name of the iconic Pioneers Cabin on 99 Street NW to the Bison Lodge.

“We’re broadening our scope to truly include Northern Alberta, and (to) create a more open and more philanthropic cause that goes beyond our membership,” Mike Alexander, the executive director of both the “purposeful social club” and the lodge, told Taproot.

Alexander became executive director in October and was handed a list of priorities from the association’s board. Number one on the board’s list was “to investigate truth and reconciliation,” Alexander said. Another list-topping item was to consider a name change for the Pioneers Cabin, which was built in 1959.

He began his work by establishing a relationship with Lewis Cardinal, a communicator and educator who is Woodland Cree from the Sucker Creek Cree First Nation. Cardinal was also the project manager for kihciy askiy-Sacred Land ceremonial site among the many hats he wears in Edmonton.

The relationship blossomed from a conversation about a bison head that Parks Canada gifted the association many years ago, and whether the association should give it to an Indigenous group.

“You’ve had it since 1920 or 1930, it’s as much your history as it is ours,” Alexander recalled Cardinal saying. “The bison was really important for pioneers and the Indigenous community.”

The bison idea grew from there. Cardinal pointed out that at one time, bison crossed the plains, traversed the Mill Creek Ravine, and would be visible from where the lodge now stands. He told Taproot that the bison head sparked a conversation.

“We were talking about the issue of the name Pioneers Cabin and some of the colonial baggage that comes along with that,” Cardinal said. “Not to discount the



pioneers’ experience by any means. They have their own story, and it should be honoured. But I said, ‘Have you considered changing the name? I think the bison is kind of pointing us in that direction.’”

The Pioneers Cabin name was adopted in 2020. Before then, the cabin was known as the Old Timers Cabin.

Alexander said one of his main priorities is to communicate that people of all backgrounds are welcome and encouraged to engage with his organization, which was founded in 1894 for pioneers and business people to socialize. He said part of this new chapter is hosting different cultural nights for specific communities where dance and other cultural expressions come into focus.

“The key is to expose people to cultures that they’re not necessarily completely

familiar within a safe space where they know they’re allowed to (participate) because they’re being taught that by the community,” Alexander said.

Another way Alexander said he hopes to broaden the association’s reach is by working more closely with Indigenous peoples. The association now has an advisory committee of elders. Alexander said it plans to host culturally specific events like sober dances for Indigenous youth.

But Alexander is cautious not to organize things that aren’t appropriate for him to be involved in.

“One of the things the elders mentioned is that young teens and young adults don’t have spaces to go have cultural social events where they’re safe — both physically and culturally safe,” Alexander said. “We’re advocates





for all cultures and all human rights, but we shouldn't overstep into taking on ceremonial roles ourselves."

Alexander said he's not aware of any colonial activities performed by his organization as a whole. Still, Frank Oliver, a central founder of the organization, has a well-known legacy of colonial oppression in Edmonton and Canada that Alexander is working to face head-on.

Oliver, who was a newspaper publisher before becoming minister of the interior and superintendent-general of Indian affairs, systemically harmed Indigenous and other racialized people in his various political posts.

This history has recently been part of renaming activities in Edmonton. It's why

the central neighbourhood that used to bear Oliver's name is now Wihkwentówin.

Alexander said he can't be sure, but thinks that Oliver's role in the federal government might be how the lodge got its bison head.

"This was discussed with our Indigenous elders council and their feedback was that they don't want history to be erased — they want history to be told," Alexander said. "We're not removing Frank Oliver's picture from our walls, but we are working to curate a more holistic history within the cabin to talk about things like the Indigenous efforts that allowed pioneers to survive."

Alexander had another major challenge beyond community engagement. The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on

the association's finances and he needed to whip them into shape. By increasing event rentals, cutting costs, and scoring a new liquor licence, the association is back in the black and able to program the events that Alexander believes will build a sense of belonging and understanding. The next one is Latin SBKZ Night on Oct. 19. The program includes dance lessons, DJs, performances, and food.



## Names, dates, and places

The Northern Alberta Pioneers and Descendants Association registered in 1894 as The Edmonton Old Timers Association, but Alexander said there's a membership pin that dates back to 1849 in the association's archives. The organization was renamed the Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers Association in 1925 before adopting its

current name in 1983. The cabin now located on 99 Street NW was built by a homebuilder named Hobart Dowler in Pigeon Lake in 1959. Dowler then disassembled the cabin, transported it into Edmonton, and reassembled it. Its original name was the Old Timers Cabin. That name was changed in 2020 to the Pioneers Cabin before changing in July to the Bison Lodge. □

*SEF supported NAPDA in the past with renovation financing, and are delighted to share this update, courtesy of TapRoot Edmonton.*

# Stonehouse Publishing

## Spotlighting prairie voices

As one of Edmonton-based Stonehouse Publishing's co-founders and publishers, Netta Johnson sees the work of local authors as being an essential part of what makes the prairie provinces so unique.

"It's about maintaining a culture that reflects the area that we live in here in Alberta, because there are stories that need to be told about the things that are happening in our lives," she says.

"Having a local publisher ensures that these stories get out into the market and are celebrated properly. It ensures that we can have stories told about our cities."

In a market dominated by big-name authors and international titles, getting those stories to market is no easy feat. Johnson was familiar with the Social Enterprise Fund from previous work and hoped that financing from SEF could help improve the publishing house's marketing reach. Through better marketing, Johnson hoped to build Alberta's literary scene and bolster the voices of local authors who might not otherwise be heard.

"Sometimes, American culture and stories seem so dominant. It's like we're seeing this mirror reflected in the stories we hear all the time, but the mirror isn't us," she says. "It's not Alberta; it's something completely different. So how do we maintain our own culture if we can't get our stories out there?"

Over the years, the publishing house has built a community of authors and readers who believe in and understand its mandate of supporting local authors.

One of the ways that Stonehouse builds that community is through launch parties designed to celebrate the titles and authors it publishes each year. The parties serve as more than a social function; they're a chance to introduce readers to



different, but equally good authors from across the prairies.

"We put a real focus on trying to figure out how to release our yearly season in style, because it's really worth celebrating," she says.

Their methods seem to be paying off. In the first decade of Stonehouse's existence, its publications have amassed a wide range of recognitions and awards, including nods from Crime Writers of Canada, the Book Publishers of Alberta and the City of Edmonton. Johnson hopes those are only the beginning.

"Readers themselves are realizing to what degree the market is saturated with non-local work. So we're seeing a more of a shift to recognize the incredible titles that are published locally," she says. □

## Partnerships make impact investing possible

Social enterprises, like any small businesses, require access to capital to grow. Given their sometimes unusual structure or business sphere, social enterprises often face challenges finding the financing they need through traditional sources. SEF acts as a patient lender, working with these enterprises to meet their financing needs, whether through a big or small loan. Loans are repayable with interest — and in this way, the funds can go on to assist other social entrepreneurs.

SEF was established in 2008 through a unique collaboration between the Edmonton Community Foundation and the City of Edmonton. Other contributors to the fund have included the United Way, the Alberta Real Estate Foundation and several private contributors. So far, the fund has invested over \$90M in 110 projects and counting. More than \$45 million has been paid back, ready to do more good in the community as new loans.

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