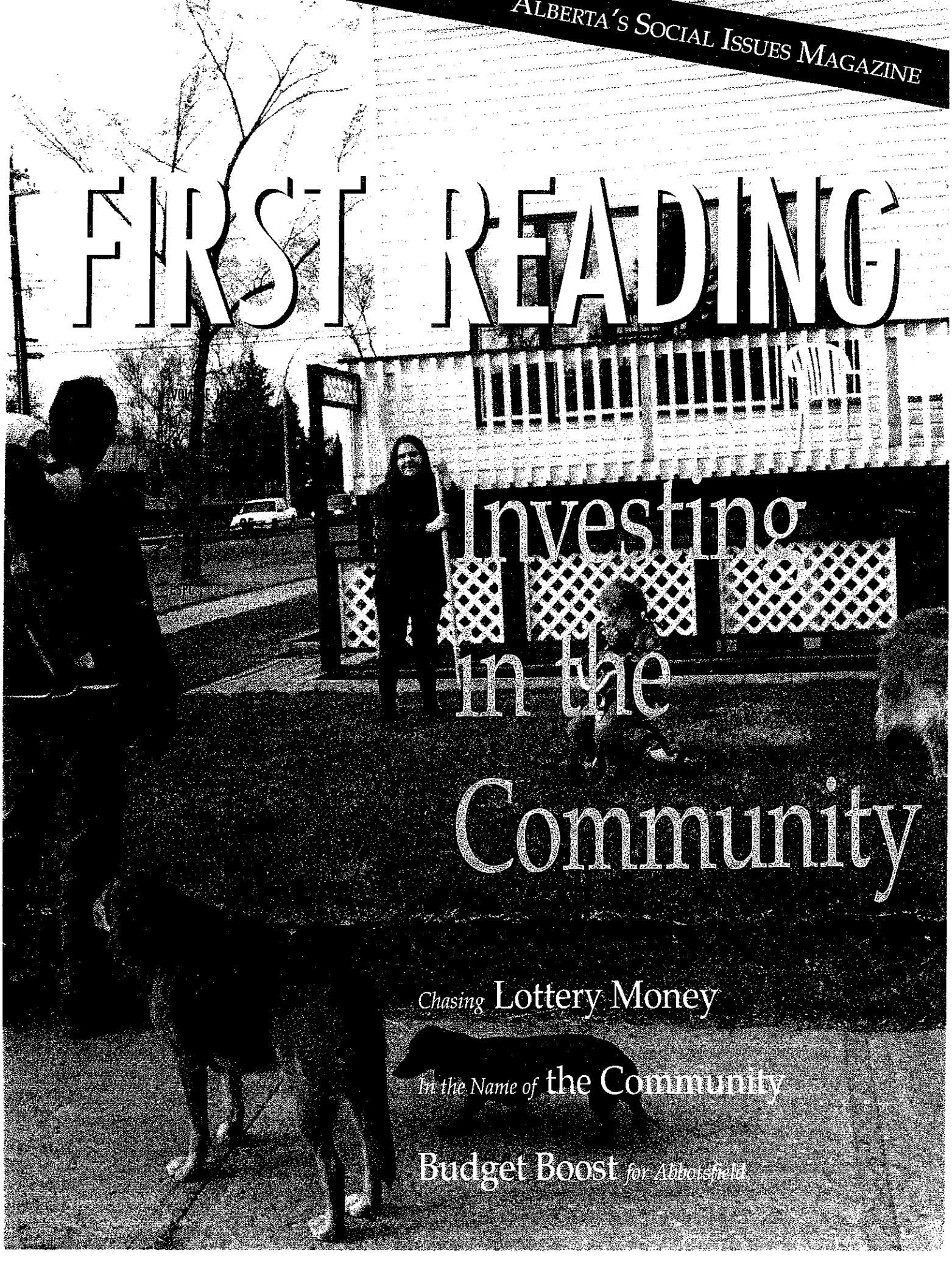
Alberta's Social Issues Magazine

First Reading



Investing in the Community

Chasing Lottery Money

In the Name of the Community

Budget Boost *for Abbotsfield*

edmonton
SOCIAL PLANNING
council

First Reading is published six times a year by the Edmonton Social Planning Council. The Council is an independent, not-for-profit organization, whose activities include social research, policy analysis, and advocacy.

We welcome new members, or the opinions and suggestions of our current members. All membership requests or magazine contributions can be forwarded to:

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Inside you'll find...

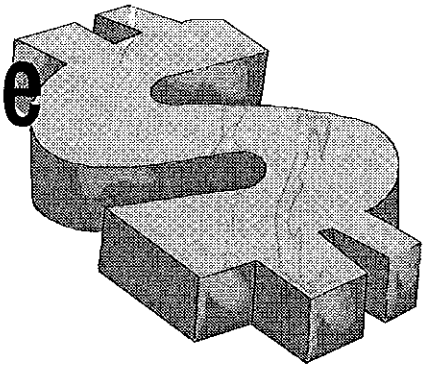
Mission

" The Edmonton Social Planning Council believes that all people should have the social rights and freedoms to live and work in an environment that enhances individual, family, and community growth without restricting the same rights and freedoms for others. The Council seeks to create, to advocate, and to support changes in policies, attitudes, and actions in order to enhance these social rights and freedoms. "

Our Goals

- To undertake research into the nature and magnitude of social issues in the community.
- To increase public awareness and understanding of current social issues and to exercise an independent voice in the community.
- To encourage greater public participation in the development of social policies and in the implementation of programs.

A Prelude to a Cautionary Tale



Ralph Klein and his government probably aren't too anxious to receive the final report of the Alberta Lottery Review Committee. They're most likely very supportive as the release of the report is continuously delayed. In the interim they can enjoy the millions of dollars of gravy money that flows to them from lotteries—while now at least they don't have to answer to anyone about it. They can even attempt to lure the World Fair to our province by promising a potential deficit be financed by the province—linking it to lottery money.

Did you know that every dollar you spend on a lottery ticket gives the Alberta government 36 cents. And when you plug a loonie into a video lottery terminal you give our government 23 cents. Small change—No. It adds up into the hundreds of millions of dollars in a year ($342.8 million in the fiscal year ended March 31, 1994). That's a fair-sized pot of gold at the end of the lottery rainbow—well maybe rainbow is the wrong word. It makes it sound like a treasure, when actually it is money that has been lost by people, some who can't afford to lose it. That problem has only been intensified with the introduction of 6,000 video lottery terminals across the province. It's true that adults are free to spend their money as they so choose, but unfortunately their choices—or addictions, impact on their families. With less than one per cent of lottery revenues earmarked for AADAC, which provides programs to help problem gamblers, a lot of people are losing rent and grocery money.

Charities are being hard-hit as well. An *Ottawa Citizen* article (Albertans leery of politicians' plans for windfall gambling profits—Feb. 11/95) stated that charity gambling receipts are down by 18 to 20 per cent in some Alberta jurisdictions after the introduction of the video lottery terminals. It seems people would rather see the blinking lights of a slot machine than support a charity at a local bingo or casino. It could be that the terminals are still relatively new and the novelty has not worn off, but charities will most likely continue to raise less than they had previously.

Maybe the government justifies the lottery revenues by allocating two-thirds of this windfall into essential service funding. It used to be the case that such unpredictable revenue was not relied upon to fund essential services. Instead it went to cultural and recreational funding. The discussion paper, prepared by the Lottery Review Committee prior to their public consultations, says "That money becomes part of government's regular budget and is used to support ongoing programs in health, education, social services and other important priority programs." If you consult the provincial government's public account statements you can see the amount of lottery net revenues that are transferred into general government revenues, but from there the money is very difficult to trace. There's no obvious way to trace if the money actually goes into health care or education or social services.

Will accountability for the money be addressed by the government? Concerned Albertans certainly raised this as an issue as the Lottery Review Committee travelled around Alberta earlier this year. Whether accountability will be raised by the committee in the final report is yet to be seen. It's hard to know when we'll even *see* the final report. The chair of the committee, Judy Gordon, has her office staff inform curious callers that because of the huge number of submissions, the review committee is just now starting to review all the information. The earliest release date would be the end of June, but no promises are being made.

As we wait for the final report of the Alberta Lottery Review Committee we thought it might be interesting to find out how other provinces handle the hundreds of millions of dollars they reap from lotteries. We looked specifically to Ontario where their windfalls go mostly to health care. *See page 4*

Ontario's Lottery Proceeds

A Cautionary Tale

By Donna Laframboise

In August 1993, the Ontario Lottery Corporation threw a party. In addition to orchestrating a ten-city media tour and purchasing full-page newspaper advertisements, it provided free admission to more than fifty events and attractions across the province for a day. The celebration commemorated the fact that, during its eighteen-year history, the lottery corp. had generated over $5 billion in profits. (That figure has since risen to $6 billion.) Yet despite the advertising slogan which tells Ontarians "we all win" by buying tickets, there is a yawning chasm between what we were led to believe would happen to lottery proceeds and what has, in fact, occurred.

By 1974, out-of-province lotteries had already become popular in Ontario. It therefore seemed reasonable for the government to attempt to keep some of this money at home. Ontario's original Lottery Act decreed that funds raised in this manner would be reserved for "the promotion and development of fitness, sports, recreational and cultural activities and facilities therefore" - projects which, at the time, didn't qualify for government assistance.

The provincial Tories, Liberals and NDP all agreed that earmarking lottery dollars in this way was right and proper. Since government was said to be merely making the best of a bad situation - as opposed to getting into the gambling promotion business—the amount of money raised was bound to vary from year to year. Therefore, these dollars could not, and should not, be depended on to fund ordinary government services. To put it another way, there was a consensus in the province that lottery earnings were gravy, distinct from the meat and potatoes revenues raised by traditional taxation.

Twenty years later, barely a shred of such high mindedness remains. The lottery corp.'s current poster campaign promoting instant (scratch) tickets features the famous sculpture known as The Thinker. Superimposed on a photo of the man deep in thought, his stone chin resting on his fist, are the words: "Don't think for an instant." Another ad in the series shows a man holding onto three leashed pigs, accompanied by the caption: "Go hog wild for an instant." While beer companies produce commercials urging people to exercise good judgment and moderation when consuming alcoholic products, Ontario now entreats its citizens to buy lottery tickets impulsively and excessively.

Because lotteries proved to be more popular than anyone had predicted, there were larger profits to dispose of than had been anticipated. The first step away from the earmarking mandated by the Act occurred in the late '70s when the Tories decided that revenues generated by tickets such as Lotto 649 (which are marketed jointly with other provinces rather than by Ontario alone) weren't governed by the legislation. Thus, this money was considered to have no strings attached to it and small amounts were allocated to various ministries, including Labor and Natural Resources, while most was kept in trust.

In 1986, the Tories introduced Bill 38, which

would have removed from the Act altogether the clause which says proceeds must be used for specific purposes. They backed down after encountering a ground swell of public protest, but quietly redirected $430 million of the accumulated surplus into general revenues nevertheless. A few years later, the Liberal government would interpret the Act differently, admitting that profits from tickets sold in conjunction with other provinces should always have been subject to the legislation's restrictions. Life continued on, however. And from the perspective of the original beneficiaries, matters got worse.

The Trillium Foundation, which distributes grants to social service agencies such as Meals on Wheels and Big Sisters, was designated as an official beneficiary under the Act in 1989. Protection of the environment was added to the list in 1990. But there has been an even more significant change. Money which the government decides not to allocate to these six areas (none of which are guaranteed a nickel) can now be legally redirected to the day-to-day operation of the province's hospitals. The 1989 amendments also decreed that unspent lottery funds accumulated up to that point in time would go to hospitals. As a result, the Liberals directed more than $2 billion in lottery profits to the health ministry in the 1989-90 fiscal year alone.

This doesn't mean Health received an extra $2 billion windfall, however. In truth, the distribution of lottery proceeds has become little more than a shell game. These dollars have long been indistinguishable from general revenues in Ontario. Our government merely goes through the charade of saying that this particular sack of money was spent on health care, thus allowing it to use the millions it would otherwise have had to allocate to hospitals for alternative purposes.

Moreover, Health—which was never supposed to be supported by gambling revenues because it is an essential government service—has been gobbling up a larger and larger piece of the lottery profits pie. Between 1991 and 1994, its share rose from 71 to 82 per cent. The trend has, therefore, not only been embraced but accelerated by the NDP after it formed the provincial government in the autumn of 1990, despite the fact that this party had previously served as Ontario's conscience on such issues.

It's more than a little ironic that less than six months before he became provincial Treasurer, opposition MPP Floyd Laughren tabled a private member's bill which would have put an end to the treatment of lottery profits as general revenues by placing their allocation in the hands of an independent body. Nothing has been heard of the idea since. And, notwithstanding a legislative committee's 1987 recommendation that the treasurer prepare an annual catalogue of where lottery funds end up in order to promote more public accountability, Ontarians are still waiting. ◉

Donna Laframboise writes a weekly "opinions" column for the Toronto Star. She follows lottery and gambling issues closely.

In the Name of Community

...dressing up the right-wing conservative agenda

By Christine Macken

Over in the legislature one imagines a voice saying "I just gave them what they wanted... they asked for less government, for more say in the community...don't blame me...I listened to the community...they said they wanted this."

The challenge for modern governments is to respond in a fair and just way to what the people want. This question of 'what the community wants' is at the heart of the debate on the turn over of government services to 'the community.' I use the term 'community' somewhat hesitantly, and hope to show in this article that we should all be very careful and hesitant about its use. But first, some thoughts about what Ralph says the people wanted.

The turn over of delivery of health care to an appointed board; the forced establishment of school councils to advise education officials on subjects as diverse as funding and field trips; the turn over of child welfare to 'the community' and leaving it up to 'the community' to ensure that standards are enforced. All of this has been done, according to Ralph Klein's government, in response to 'the community.' A complete outsider, hearing this news, might think that Alberta is some type of social democratic utopia. But, as many of us have found, one person's utopia is often someone else's version of a nightmare.

If we cast our collective minds back to the election hoopla of June 1993 it is difficult to recall regional health authorities or school councils being anywhere on the agenda of the Tory party. What we might recall is that some Albertans, mainly Liberals and New Democrats, were concerned that the Klein government would do away with universal access to medical care or de-insure some medical services. Others, mainly conservative and reform supporters, were demanding that government spending be slashed and that the bureaucracy be drastically reduced.

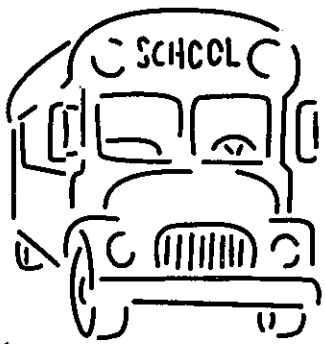
Upon reflection, did the government respond to what the people wanted? Has the bureaucracy been drastically cut? No. What we did get, instead, is the addition of new layers of bureaucratic structures that have been placed between the community and the government. What we also got, is a strategy by elected politicians to insulate themselves from public concern and anger over any problems that might subsequently arise as a result of drastic cutbacks in funding for health, education and social services. This strategy allows the government to ruthlessly pursue its strategy of deficit reduction, but it has been done in your name and my name—that is, it has been done because the community wanted it. And, to cap it all off, they have given us a whole new set of 'community structures' to deal with.

We are right to ask whether these new structures meet community needs. After all, we presume there is an interest among elected politicians in meeting community needs, because as we so often heard during the 1993 election "Ralph listens...Ralph cares...he hears you..." However, this is the dilemma for those of us who share any kind of dream about a kinder, caring, community. It is the Achilles heel for those of us who believe we can make these new structures even partly accountable to the community. Talking with and listening to the community is extremely risky for politicians let alone community advocates. This is because rather than speaking with one voice, 'the community' speaks with many voices. Voices that are sometimes confusing, often conflicting, many times quiet or silenced or, in many instances, uninformed. Become informed, however, and a community runs the risk of being labelled a special interest group.

In Alberta, there is no homogenous community voice. What we have is a collection of diverse voices, some louder than

others; some that are listened to; some that are ignored and many that express different needs. Which voice did Ralph hear? One suspects it was not low income single parents who have neither the time, skills nor the energy to make it through the new maze of bureaucratic structures; or the children that get shunted from foster home to group home and eventually to the Young Offender Centre; or seniors who are too old or ill to put up a strong fight about inadequate health care and low incomes. And those of us who work in social service agencies, or who advocate on behalf of the marginalized and powerless, are now suspect because we do not represent 'the community.'

In Alberta, you see, the marginalized and the powerless, the poor and the unskilled, have no place in Ralph's vision of 'the community.' This is made readily clear by the absence of any attempts to listen to, or to even begin to address the needs of these people. In fact, if you look at what needs have been met by the new administration, one begins to get an image of who Ralph listens to, of who belongs to Ralph's community and which needs are being met.



The Klein government listens to doctors who want to offer their version of community medical services (outside of the Canada Health Act); he listens to Christian fundamentalists who want school councils to ensure that little Johnnie is not corrupted by the likes of John Steinbeck; or, heaven forbid, that little Josie should be subjected to a curriculum that includes information about birth control; he listens to those who through luck and circumstances made it 'without help from anyone,' and who now demand that government should eliminate welfare for single moms and others who are too lazy to get a job; he listens to businessmen who believe there is a buck to be made in delivering and administrating government programs to 'the community.'

Ultimately, Ralph listens to a group of people who indeed have a common voice. However, this voice has nothing to do with community. It is, instead, a voice that speaks strongly about the role of government. It says, loudly, that less is more; that government has no role in the provision of services, that government has no place in the redistribution of wealth. Government is merely an overseer whose task is to ensure that the new 'community' structures provide services within budget. In this voice, individuals are at best autonomous; they and they alone, are responsible for their wants and needs. At worse, they don't even exist and are silent.

It is a contradiction in terms to even try to say that this 'new way to do business' has anything remotely at all to do with community. It has nothing to do with a dream that is shared by many Albertans, mainly liberals and socialists; where community is viewed as a collection of people, young, old, black, brown and white; where family comes in many shapes and forms; where people have multi-dimensional connections and responsibilites; where people have diverse skills, needs and wants; but above all, where the people together, the community, shares responsibility for meeting needs through the redistribution of wealth and through the provision of services. This is a notion of community that is not shared by the current administration.

When Josie's reading problem is not detected until junior high school, when Grandpa remains housebound because he is waiting for a cataract operation, when another child dies in foster care; Mike Cardinal, Shirley McClelland, Halvar Jonson and Ralph Klein will say, 'don't blame us—you should go talk to your local health authority, your school council, or to your Commissioner for Children's Services. They are now responsible.

This new approach to the delivery of government services meets one, and only one, philosophy. It is a philosophy where government dictates what the community wants and then says that the individual is responsible for seeing that he or she gets it.

The challenge for those of us who hang on to the dream of a different concept of community is whether to participate in this nightmare. Some choose not to. Some continue to hammer away at the system in the hope that some impact, no matter how small, is made and that some needs will be met. All share a

Continued on page 21—In the Name of Community

Edmonton Community Leagues – who are they serving?

By Maureen Aytenfisu

Among the most important forces in the life of many Edmonton communities are the local community leagues. These associations are organized and run by community members and are intended to serve the interests and needs of those communities. They are among the most effective instruments available to citizens to shape the lifestyle and values of their communities.

In practice, however, community leagues operate without the widespread participation or influence of a sizable element of the community: the working poor and those on government social assistance programs. This fact has become apparent from a survey of community league participation by low income families, conducted recently by a committee of the Southwest Area Council of the (Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues) EFCL. The results of this phenomenon of non-participation by the poor are unfortunate both for these families and for the community at large.

Low income families who do not join their community leagues lose out on the opportunities for physical fitness, socialization and cultural development which are provided by the league programs. The larger community loses out too. First, it fails to capitalize on the talents and non-material resources of a sizable portion of its membership. As well, it suffers indirectly from the deleterious effects of such phenomena as boredom, frustration and anger among the poor.

If the community league serves such a potentially valuable role, as has been suggested, why are low income families not represented in larger numbers? Are they not interested in involvement in the larger community? Or are they willing, but not able, to participate in the community league?

The early results of the Southwest Area Council survey of community league participation suggest that financial considerations are paramount in preventing low income families from joining their community leagues. So is a lack of awareness of community league activities and their benefits. And so, finally, is a feeling among the poor that community leagues do not want them to be involved.

To the wealthier members of the community, it may seem unfathomable that somebody should be put off by community league fees ranging from $30 to $50 for most memberships and $30 to $80 for most programs. But for many families in Edmonton, these amounts represent a deep slice out of the weekly food budget. When membership fees are combined with program and equipment fees, especially if there is more than one family member registered, the majority of community league programs are totally out of reach for the working poor or those on social assistance.

Closely related to financial difficulties as a factor in precluding community league participation among the poor is social and cultural alienation from the middle or upper classes of society. A common feeling among economically disadvantaged families is that they are outsiders, separated from the community league.

In at least one community, families in the publicly subsidized housing complex have not

been canvassed for community membership for at least 12 years. This begs the question: what importance does this particular community league place on the involvement of these low income families? For their part, the residents of the complex have interpreted the league's failure to canvass them for membership as a sign that their participation is not highly valued.

In some instances, language and cultural differences reinforce the gap between the wealthier and poorer members of communities and mitigate against participation of the poor in their community leagues. Unsure of the functions of the community league, and of their possible role in it, many newcomers to the society are left on the sidelines of community activity.

Are there any ways to break down the barriers between the poorer and wealthier segments of the community and to facilitate the involvement of the poor in their community leagues? Of course there are, and the sooner that steps are taken in this regard, the healthier will be the fabric of the community as a whole.

Community league membership and programs must be made accessible to all who wish to join. This means that, in some cases, families must be offered the choice of paying for membership and programs in kind, rather than in money. Various possibilities for such forms of payment exist and individual communities should adapt these to their own makeup and needs. Some examples of payment other than by money include working at bingos, a system which is incidentally already being used successfully in a number of communities, and working at other community ventures, such as ice-rink cleaning or distribution of the community league newsletter. In cases where families are stretched to their absolute limit financially, and in terms of time or energy, the community should step in and subsidize the family's involvement in the community.

The pay-off for such an investment will occur in the future, in the form of healthier and more stable family units who will return greater financial and social dividends to society at large. The alternative to such forms of assistance is to pay in other ways, such as to repair the physical and emotional damages caused by those who are left out of society and rebel against their lot in life.

Once having undertaken the task of ensuring that all who wish to join community leagues may do so, the community as a whole must make sure that low income families are made aware of the choice to pay for their involvement by alternative methods. After all, what is the use of an assistance program if those who need it do not know about it, or do not take advantage of it?

photo courtesy of Maureen Aytenfisu

The local playground proves to be the most popular spot in the neighborhood.

The challenge must be taken up by the wealthier and poorer members of the community alike if our Edmonton community leagues are truly to serve the interests of all segments of the community. The goal of Edmonton in its bicentennial year should be to open the door of participation in community leagues to all its citizens. The citizens themselves, whether rich or poor, should realize that they are equally valuable constituents of their community, with equally valuable gifts to offer and equal rights to share in the fruits of their community's labor.

Maureen Aytenfisu is a full time homemaker and mother of six children. She has been involved with the Duggan Tenants Association; The Duggan Community League; P.R.I.D.E. (tenants association through the Edmonton Housing Authority; and La Petite Ecole (playschool).

STRENGTHENING LOCAL ECONOMIES

By Harvey Voogd

"There are many myths about poverty. One of them is the notion that the problem of poverty is simply that the poor don't have enough income. In reality, more money flows into poor communities than most people realize—but most of it flows right back out again.

The problem is not simply income, but rather the structure of ownership in poor communities, where land, housing, employment, and financial institutions are controlled by outside interests."
(*Revolving Loan Fund*, Institute for Community Economics)

This certainly typifies my neighborhood of Boyle Street and McCauley, where a high percentage of land and housing is absentee-owned. Similar economic forces impoverish urban and rural communities across Canada. And it is these forces which have led to a renewed interest in Community Economic Development (CED).

According to Marie Carlson, Project Coordinator of the Boyle Street-McCauley Community Planning Office, CED activity is flourishing across Canada and the USA. "There are in excess of 2,000 CED organizations in the USA; 88 per cent intervene in social housing for low-income people.

In Canada, CED is primarily a rural phenomenon that goes back to the early cooperative movement in Quebec and Nova Scotia. The first urban CED corporation (CEDC) was established in Montreal in 1967.

Since 1980, there has been increased growth in Canadian CED activity. There are roughly 20 CEDCs or Community Development Corporations (CDC) in Quebec alone. The number across Canada is not exactly known, but is estimated to be around 200."

CED is hard to define. It describes a wide variety of strategies for strengthening local economies through community participation and control over planning and resources.

Flo Frank, a consultant from Red Deer, describes CED as having the following characteristics: "CED meets social goals through economic (or business) means, but it has community ownership and control."

CED encompasses several objectives and is not just profit or job creation motivated. And CED focuses on the holistic needs of poor and marginal communities, not just individuals."

"There are tried and tested reasons why communities should undertake CED," says Flo Frank. "CED has been shown to reduce welfare and UIC rolls and increase local employment and economic opportunity.

CED is about community involvement and ownership and is a proven alternative in collapsed economies where other ways no longer work. With CED there is potential for revenue generation and long term solutions to the problems of poverty and unemployment. And there are positive spin off impacts on personal, community and economic health."

The range and number of CED initiatives is enormous. An ideal CED venture's dimensions would include employment, entrepreneurship, investment, land use planning and community education on economic alternatives. These dimensions are reflected in the variety of CED initiatives which are a reality or being planned in Edmonton.

At the root of the economic problems of low-income communities is not a lack of capacity among low-income people, but a lack of credit—a great and growing need for capital. The Alberta Indian Investment Corporation and the Metis Nation of Alberta's Apeetogosan Program are directed at Alberta's aboriginal people.

The Mennonite Centre for Newcomers' Micro-

Business Development Program focuses on immigrants. George Kelly, Executive Director of Edmonton Inner City Housing Society, is part of a group which is in the process of incorporating a Community Loan Fund (CLF). According to George Kelly, "This CLF seeks to be an Edmonton wide organization whose goal is to get capital which it would then loan or use for community business development projects."

All these organizations are addressing another of the myths about poverty—the idea that the poor are inherently bad credit risks.

As has been pointed out, "low income people are often denied credit not simply because their incomes are low but because of class, cultural and language gaps between themselves and those who control the flow of capital, because of the time required to service smaller loans and unsophisticated borrowers, and because higher profits can be made in other markets.

Unable to cross the capital gap, they cannot begin to build the credit records that would open economic opportunities for them." (*Revolving Loan Fund*, Institute for Community Economics)

The Edmonton Recycling Society (ERS) and the Architectural Clearing House are local examples of CED ventures whose raison d'être reflect environmental concerns. In its hiring of persons with mental disabilities, ERS is also trying to address the employment concerns of a discriminated sector of our society.

In my Edmonton neighborhood, the Boyle Street-McCauley Plan Implementation Board is focusing its interests from implementation of our Area Redevelopment Plan to CED. We are presently struggling to articulate our mission statement, but there is no doubt as to our dreams.

Our hope is to improve the quality of housing, create and retain jobs which can be secured by community residents, encourage the development of new business and the retention of existing businesses and create a diverse base of financial support for our CED corporation. ◎

Harvey Voogd is longtime resident of Boyle-McCauley and chairperson of the Boyle-McCauley Area Redevelopment Planning Board.

Giving Credit Where Credit is Due

By Martin Connell

In Canada, through our activities at Calmeadow, we have seen how people can pursue their dreams, stretch themselves to new limits and stand tall in the knowledge that their work is both viable and valued. We have seen people who have known hardship, and sometimes failure, find renewed strength, confidence and optimism where before there was none. And we have seen these people reach out to other members of their community to create business networks, along with friendships, bettering their communities' chances of economic revitalization.

All because of a simple loan. Albeit, a very special kind of loan that centres on trust and a fundamental belief that people are their own most productive asset.

This lending concept has flourished overseas, from Bolivia and Bangladesh, to Kenya and the Philippines. Working with and learning from our many overseas partners, Calmeadow has brought micro-enterprise lending back to Canada.

Starting in 1987, we helped to establish 14 different loan funds in native communities from British Columbia to northern Ontario. We have established successful and now expanding funds in Nova Scotia and in the lower mainland of British Columbia. Most recently, we opened an operating loan fund in Metro Toronto called Calmeadow Metrofund.

Calmeadow targets women for loans. In our experience, while women have the most difficulty accessing loans from traditional financial institutions, they have been our most reliable customers.

Of course, our lending method makes credit as accessible as possible to all our clients. We do it by using the peer group lending model. We don't require traditional collateral like formal financial institutions, but instead rely

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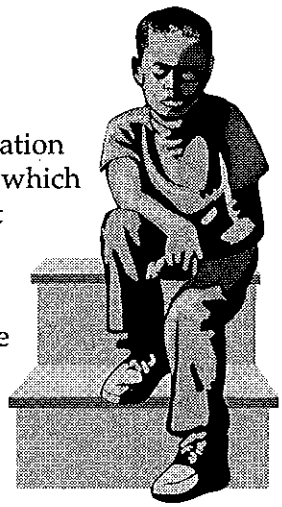
Giving Credit Where Credit is Due

The **Myth** *of* **Community**



These post-ideological days, philosophies of life must be simplified in order to fit the ever shortening span of public attention. Whereas old Leonid Brezhnev would take four hours to tell faithful comrades that the shortage of toilet paper in no way detracted from the inevitable superiority of socialism, poor Bill Clinton has to rely on key words to explain his world view.

His favorite key word is 'community.' In fact it is almost everyone's favorite word. When Ralph KIein tells us that our aging grandmother is being shipped home early from the hospital, it's because 'the community' must take more responsibility. Down in Boyle Street/McCauley, it's 'the community' which organizes pickets to stop other people who live in the neighborhood from selling their bodies on the street.

It's hard to be against 'community.' In fact Timothy McVeigh seems to be about the only fellow around who is, and he's not about to win any popularity contests.

The only thing is, no-one seems to be too clear just what is the community. Some of us even have two different things in mind at the same time. Take Ralph, for example. When it comes to appointing people to management boards with the chance to hand out patronage goodies, 'community' means 'my Conservative friends.' But when it comes to looking after Grandma, Ralph's 'community' means 'your wife.'

Not that the rest of us are much more honest. Years ago, four or five of us Leftists would get together in a smoky bar and write revolutionary missives on behalf of the working class. Today the same small groups get together in a smoke-free cappuccino shop and write grant proposals for 'community empowerment' projects. This empowerment usually involves government spending money on beautification and traffic diversion projects which (coincidentally of course) just happen to increase our property values.

Amitai Etzioni has done more thinking than most about the role of the community. The 66 year old sociologist founded the US-based Communitarian Network four years ago. Since then, his book *The Spirit of the Community* has found its way onto Bill Clinton's coffee table, and strongly influenced several key members of his cabinet. Etzioni's articles have been published in the top American newspapers, his network produces an academic journal, and a busy Internet site promotes the vision and the practice of communitarianism.

Etzioni's communitarians believe that society "increasingly threatens to become normless, self-centred, and driven by greed, special interests, and an unabashed quest for power." In response, "moral voices" are needed to "rebuild America's foundations," within the family, schools and wider society.

Much of their practical agenda is simple common sense. They helped sponsor America's first national parental leave program, oppose widespread gun ownership, and call for programs to encourage community service.

But behind the velvet glove of moral exhortation, the communitarians hide an iron fist for those who don't follow the code. Individual rights must be balanced with "the need to protect the safety and health of individuals," and so victims of AIDS and other diseases will be forced to divulge their contacts. Neighborhoods "must be provided with constitutional tools" to crack down on drug

dealers. High schools will be given the power to "maintain the social-moral climate that education requires." Society will provide for the basic needs of only those who "genuinely" cannot provide for themselves.

The problem with this punitive approach is that, almost always, it degenerates into yet another excuse to expel minority kids from schools, arrest women for being victims of the sex trade, cut the "undeserving" off welfare, and harass street people who are "disease carriers."

It's not good middle class people like us who lack community. We hang out with our workmates, visit our folks on Sundays, help out at our kids' schools, even run the odd community league bingo. When government stops clearing snow from our river valley trails, we can band together and pay the freight. Even when Grandma gets discharged from hospital, we can probably scrape up enough dough to hire some home help.

Disadvantaged people have weak communities because they're working so hard to keep themselves afloat that they don't have enough time to nurture their kids and their family lives, let alone help enrich the moral life of society. They will always disappoint and frustrate us with their apparently constant need for intervention and correction.

Like most simple and superficially attractive concepts, the communitarian agenda is a double-edged sword. Unless it is married with a relentless campaign to reduce economic and social inequities (which it rarely is), it merely deepens divisions, and ironically makes even more difficult the construction of a truly inclusive community. ◉

This article marks the last First Reading *column for our executive director, Jonathan Murphy. Jonathan will be leaving the Edmonton Social Planning Council as of June 30 to take over as the executive director of the University of Alberta's Population Lab. We regret his leaving but are grateful for the five years he spent at the Council. He is a man of many talents and to his credit the ESPC has accomplished a great deal under his leadership. We wish him all the best.*

Local Human Services

Without the Province

By Brian Maitland

Here we are at the end of an era. Provincial responsibility for the delivery of social services and programs has lasted about one generation. Unfortunately, that also has been the generation of the single largest proliferation of government activities and programs in recent history. In fact, we have come to believe that provincial control, responsibility, and management is "the way things should be." Over the last thirty years or so, this accumulation of government responsibility has led us to a place where the individual, the family, and the neighborhood or community all believe firmly in their powerlessness in the face of the larger institutional and governmental environment.

I have huge arguments with the nature and processes of many of the current Alberta government moves. Even so, there is a tremendous positive opportunity emerging as well. While this seems too much like "buying in" to the provincial agenda for some people, I believe we should grab the chance to get out from under provincial authority and control in the determination and delivery of human services and social supports. After all, many of us have said that the province has not done such a great job in this realm anyway! Are we now prepared to create a better alternative? Surely we must be.

We **will** have significant continuing budget cutting and service reductions in provincial services. We **will** see funding responsibility for human services of all types increasingly shift to the local setting. At this point I believe that we, the practitioners in human services, had better wake up, smell the roses, and **get moving** on defining the leadership, structures, relationships and priorities for local management and funding of these services. If we don't have the capacity right now in our communities, some building up will be required. But we can't take too long to think about it, or we just may find decisions being made around us, and perhaps even about us, which we'd like to see made from more of a community focus and less of a short term economic or political focus.

First, we need to look at our own beliefs about people—When we say "Power to the People!", do we really mean it? Do we really trust the residents of our communities to know and do what is in their own best interests? Or do we feel compelled to protect people, and to constrain and direct community decision-making within the bounds of what we believe are the best directions? While we may have the best of intentions in taking the second approach, in fact it is nothing more than over-professionalizing a natural human process. I suspect most of the time we are simply scared to death of what could happen if power over community life was really returned to the hands of the people.

Of course I can't say that people in communities never make mistakes. Far from it. True community development engages neighborhood and community residents in discussion and debate with uncertain outcomes. The critical point, however, is that the outcomes are owned by those stakeholders, for better or worse. They are not created as goals in a civic office and then strategically proffered to the public for reaction under the guise of community input and community control.

Second, we need to look around us at the existing power and decision-making structures and processes in our communities. How do the elected local council members view their position vis-a-vis the province? What does local responsibility mean to them and the municipal staff? What about other local government and quasi-government bodies, like health boards, library boards, and school systems? Are there non-government community agencies who have large stakes or large influences in human services? Who are the real players? We need to identify and bring together those who will drive community

decision-making in the absence of constraints and direction from the province.

Third, we need to be really clear about our evolving individual roles in the community processes. If we are truly to be instruments of change toward community growth, autonomy and self-development, what is it that we individually contribute? How do we prevent merely shifting dependence from one player (senior government) to another (possibly ourselves)? And a very practical question: Are there paying jobs for us in the change processes and in the outcomes?

Community development theory and philosophy are wonderful, but at some point the talk must become the walk. How can we do all this nice stuff when faced with the realities of fewer dollars, individualist politics, competing institutions, and fear of the future? I propose a basic redefinition of how we deliver human services.

Above all, and perhaps most troublesome of all, is the shift in thought and action that is required before honest community involvement and commitment is attempted, let alone achieved. Local governments are generally better than provincial or federal governments at **informing** and **inviting input** from their constituent communities. However, even local governments generally fall well short of effective citizen **involvement** in decisions. How often, for example, do we in local government allow, let alone encourage, community participation in developing our operating budgets? Sure, we ask people in a global sense what they do or do not want done with their tax money. We fail to equip them with enough details about what is now being done, how taxes are now being used, to allow them to consider reasonable options. The most we do is present budgets, technically in draft form, in a public setting for information. Input is invited, but we do not provide support for understanding the numbers presented, nor do we generally allow time for reflection or discussion in the community, before the document is approved by our council.

Similarly, we place too much reliance on the representativeness of the few citizens we may appoint to various advisory boards and committees. Seldom do we encourage these boards to develop, foster, and continue mechanisms of wide community consideration, discussion, and direction setting for the array of policy and action issues such boards face. The large majority of citizens in any community have little real opportunity to impact the ongoing civic decisions, other than every three years at election time. Individuals and groups end up being forced to react after the fact to decisions that don't always meet their needs or desires.

How, then, can we foster real community involvement in program decisions and civic policies? We can start by dismantling the formalized input and information processes, replacing these with opportunities for discussion and real debate, **before** a decision is made. We can provide a variety of means for residents to learn and understand the complexity of the decisions being considered. Single notices in the local weekly newspaper, especially in the legalese such notices usually comprise, are not adequate. Above all, we can allow time for community learning and considering to occur. Too often our timelines are for our convenience, or that of another agency, or of business concerns, rather than arranged to really suit the people local government is supposed to be all about.

Almost as important, segmentation has to go. We cannot provide meaningful support to people as long as we continue to deal with them only in parts. We deal with their need to learn in one group of institutions, their need for physical well-being in others, and their need for spiritual grounding in still others. That's only three of the many ways we carve up people for our professional and institutional purposes. Such segmentation has developed through access to lots of dollars, and the assumption of the business principle of "market niche". Unfortunately, therein lies a basic fallacy of applying the business approach to essentially non-business human activities. A common finding of business analyses of human services is that we try too much to be all things to all people. I argue that we must in fact try to be **more** things to **more** people. Community agencies, including local governments, have to start bringing together the whole broad range of human services into one encompassing package. We have to stop creating and supporting segmented, single-service programs. Coordination is not enough.

Continued on page 24—Local Human Services

Abbotsfield Residents stretching their Food Budgets

By Sheila Hallett-Kushniruk

A food co-op in Abbotsfield is making dollars stretch for participants. For $15 a month, group members end up taking home about $25 worth of groceries every third Friday of the month—a time when the cupboards start to look a little bare.

The co-op asks participants to pay their $15 at the end of the month when they get a support cheque or a pay cheque. Buying in larger quantities enables the co-op food purchaser to get better deals when she approaches wholesalers and distributors. For people on a low or fixed income it provides a service which will really pay off as more people become involved.

photo by Sheila Hallett-Kushniruk

Volunteers separate potatoes into individual family portions to be included in the food co-op grocery bags.

In the first month Cheri Harris was purchasing for 48 families which has remained quite constant. Cheri is hoping to double the number of participants within the first year. Cheri and outreach worker Carol Schwendeman job share through the Wecan Cooperative, which is located in Abbotsfield Mall. Carol has been approaching school newsletters to include notices about the co-op and she's been hanging posters in the area and making phone calls to spread the word. With only three months under their belts they are quite happy with the response but wish more people would see the value and join. "This program is directed to people who really don't want to rely on the food bank," said Cheri.

Spirits are high as volunteers meet to separate the bulk purchases into individual bags. Many of the volunteers speak Spanish and under the direction of Carol and Cheri they count out items, weigh quantities and repackage food two hours before pick-up is scheduled. There's a real spirit of community as they work together—they may not speak the same language, but they enjoy each others company as they work side-by-side. For fun, one lady encourages the non-Spanish volunteers to learn to count in Spanish as they separate the large Alberta-grown carrots. Volunteers spell each other off and relax with a doughnut and cup of coffee when they are tired of lifting and packing. They exchange recipes and chat about the value of the groceries they are getting. In April 52 families each took home $29.93 worth of groceries all purchased from the $15 they paid at the end of March.

There are no membership fees, other than a $2 deposit on the nylon bags they use to pack the groceries. Two bags per family have been packed to overflowing with items such as chicken; luncheon meat; fresh produce; eggs and ground beef—all preferably produced in Alberta. Cheri said they may soon have to go to three bags per family because their buying power is increasing. Whereas the first two months had grocery bags filled with dry goods such as flour, cornmeal, rice and sugar, which are fairly cheap anyway, Cheri said she will concentrate on getting the most savings for the dollar with fruit, vegetables, meat and bread. One focus for the bags is kid's lunches. "We want to make sure kids don't go hungry at school," said Karen Cook, director of the Wecan Co-op.

Prices are monitored closely and participants are asked to give feedback on their bags. Karen said clients are often reluctant to speak up if they don't like something. She said many are not used to being treated with respect, but staff stress that this is not a hand out and that participants are wanted customers. Many

participants volunteer to separate and pack the groceries on the third Friday of the month, so not only are they paying for the groceries, but they are also working voluntarily to help make the program work. They've even had people who aren't getting food show up to volunteer —they just want to help.

It's an idea that took about two years to come to fruition in Abbotsfield, but it's been working for years in other cities in Canada and the United States. The concept was brought to the Wecan Cooperative by Sister Mary of the Atonement Home. She had worked in Washington DC where the concept had worked for years. A committee was struck to pursue the idea and once the details were ironed out, Wecan Cooperative applied for funding to support the shared position. They hope to eventually have enough participants to make the project self-supporting—taking in enough money to pay for staff and have money left over to get more groceries than the $15 would ordinarily buy at a local grocery store. This would mean about 18 to 20 per cent administration costs and that could be supplemented by fund-raisers such as meat draws every month.

In the summer months produce for the co-op food bags may be supplied by the community garden that is operated through Wecan Cooperative. Community members can work on about eight acres worth of garden plots which are located north of Edmonton near Alberta Hospital. Last year the gardens produced enough vegetables for all participants with an extra 800 kg left over to donate to the Food Bank.

Both the community garden and the food co-op do more than just supply food. They draw people together from the community—giving them a common bond and a social outing. Karen has seen people form friendships with both programs and it helps introduce them to other services available in the neighborhood. Abbotsfield is beginning to shake its reputation as a community where people only live until they can find something better. "This is keeping people in the neighborhood and offering them ways to better their lives," said Karen. "Little by little our community is really becoming a place where people want to stay and move to." ◎

Sheila Hallett-Kushniruk is the publications editor of First Reading magazine.

Giving Credit Where Credit is Due—
Continued from page 11

on character. Through borrowers' groups of four to six members, individuals come together to approve and support each other's loans. It's a very popular idea, an understandable concept that people seem to really like. And it works—98 per cent repayment with no collateral.

The loans operate to give people dignity and equality as they gain financial self-reliance. It's a commercial transaction where services are offered for a price. There is no dependence or stigma such as many welfare recipients experience. People who borrow, regardless of their economic circumstances, see themselves as successful customers, not as failures. In this context, we feel that the issue of charging interest rates high enough to cover costs becomes less contentious. We view subsidized interest rates as an unreliable and unpredictable source of revenue that over time can disappear and thereby collapse the program. We charge interest rates which must ultimately cover costs and help to preserve the capital that we have put to work to ensure our financial resources can be recycled to new clients.

I've seen how a $1,000 loan in downtown Vancouver can change the life of a chronically unemployed single mother and give her a chance to start living out her dream. I've seen the faces of the people we serve light up with pride when they show their businesses. It's changed how I see the world. It's given me the hope that a difference can be made. ◎

Martin Connell is the President and co-founder of Calmeadow.

DISCOVERING THE RED TREE

By Ken Noskiye

I sat in the sweatlodge, the womb of our sacred Mother Earth. I watched him and wondered—what makes him so special? It wasn't until he started to speak that I realized what sets him apart from so many so-called "spiritual leaders."

David LaSwisse had invited me to join him, along with others, in a ceremony that is older than time immemorial: the sweatlodge ceremony. A sweatlodge ceremony is where my people, the indigenous people of North America, come to pray; to cleanse the spirit; to connect with the Creator and to wash away the pain that we sometimes carry. The ceremony is always lead by one person. A sweatlodge is not claimed, bought or stolen, it must be earned. It is earned by the person who has endured the pains that we carry. Suffered not behind us, not in front of us but suffered right there beside us. It is earned by a person who has proven to be worthy of being a true spiritual leader. David LaSwisse is just that person.

photo by Sheila Hallett-Kushniruk

David LaSwisse shares a teaching about the phases of life.

Fifty-three years ago David was born in Standing Buffalo, Saskatchewan. He fondly remembers the guidance of his grandparents as a boy. David's parents were separated and he was placed in a residential school. At 14, he had his first taste of alcohol. It was the beginning of a cycle of alcohol abuse that lasted 23 years. He recalls when his grandmother tried to get him to stop drinking but he just didn't know how. "I remember when I was young, lost and confused from all the drinking, my grandmother came up to me, took my hand in her soft hands and said 'Have good courage grandson. One day people will look to you for guidance.' I didn't know what she meant by that." It would be years later that his grandmother's words would have true meaning.

During the cycle of alcohol abuse, David ended up on skid rows, "drinking anything I could get my hands on." He did time in provincial jails and finally ended up in federal prisons. In 1980, he was sent to the Drumheller Federal Penitentiary. It was there where he finally decided to do something about his life. "I enrolled in the prison's educational program and I also started to attend Alcoholic Anonymous meetings." David was starting on a journey that his grandmother had predicted many years earlier. School went well for him and AA meetings were also a source of education for him. But, there was still something missing. "Even though I was enjoying a life of sobriety and finally gaining confidence in my schooling, there was still something missing. I still felt empty in my heart."

David heard all about God at the meetings and he decided he would ask God to come into his life. "I waited for the guard to make his rounds, as I didn't want him, or anyone else, seeing me praying. I got on my hands and knees and asked the Creator to come into my life. It was one of the most powerful and beautiful experiences of my life. It was so simple. As I prayed, I was gifted with a vision. Of course I didn't know what it meant but I do know it was real. I saw this tree, a red tree, and there were people dancing around the tree." David's vision wouldn't have

significance until he was released from prison.

In 1981, David walked out of the penitentiary a free man. He made his way towards Edmonton, and enrolled in a 28-day alcohol and drug treatment program. He also continued his education. He was able to get his grade 12 diploma through a general equivalency program. He continued to attend AA meetings and also enrolled in the University of Alberta, working towards a bachelor of arts degree, majoring in sociology. But, he still wanted to learn more. He decided to follow the traditional ways of our ancestors—it would be a pivotal point in his life.

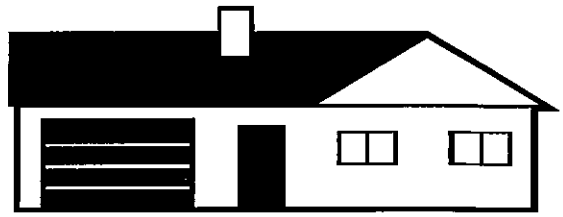
David was invited to participate in a sundance ceremony, the most sacred of all ceremonies. I sat with David as he shared this story with me. It was beautiful to see a man shine like he did. It was a shine that one probably gets when touched by the Almighty. The words that he speaks are soft words, words that come from a caring heart. It seemed like each word was a treasure and, indeed, they were. "I walked up to the sundance arbor," he recalls. "I looked around and saw all these people dancing, praying while they danced. It was beautiful. I took part in the ceremony and when I looked at the center of the arbor, there was a tree, a *red* tree. I remembered my vision, a vision that came to me in prison. I looked and I started to cry as I knew that I had found what I had searched for all my life: freedom. I knew the sundance tree was my freedom." That was 12 years ago. Since that time David has been leading ceremonies all over. He is now recognized as one of Turtle Island's spiritual leaders.

David is now employed as a counsellor and life skills coach at the Ben Calf Robe School, here in Edmonton. It's a position that carries many responsibilities and one he doesn't take lightly. Mavis Averill, program supervisor at the school, is thankful that David chose to work with the students. "David's work with the students is essential. We were looking for someone who could be a counsellor and someone who is gifted culturally. We got all that, and then some, when he came to work with us."

As the final song was sung inside the womb of our sacred Mother Earth, I thanked the Creator for guiding me to David. I felt a sense of peace in my heart, knowing that the songs of my people will endure, knowing that the traditions of my ancestors will carry on. I thanked the Creator for people like David LaSwisse. ®

Ken Noskiye is an Aboriginal freelance journalist.

SEEKING COMMUNITY STABILITY



By June Sheppard

Growing up as I did in the community of Norwood in Edmonton, my recollections are of quiet streets shaded by lovely trees, of houses of many sizes and types from the smallest cottages to large two-storey places with big windows and upstairs balconies.

The wide range in housing types reflected the range in economic levels. I've written before about the general manager of the city's transit system living a few doors from a garbage collector who kept two big horses in a barn in the back yard!

It all seemed perfectly natural in those days. Of course it was before where you lived and what you lived in became an indication, not just of your finances, but of your worth as a citizen, your character and your general importance!

Norwood was a cordial community where greetings were exchanged as people passed on the street but little fraternizing.

Your mother may have baked a superb batch or cinnamon roles but offering them to newcomers as a welcoming gesture before she even knew their names was not thought appropriate.

I thought of that not long ago when I read a quotation from Oscar Newman, the American founder of the Institute for Community Design Analysis.

"For a community to be safe and stable one's neighborhood need not be one's close friends—they need only to be good neighbors!"

However, it was harder for the kids to stay aloof. They ventured closer and closer to the newcomers' fences—peeking through hopefully for new pals. Preferably with a dog, of course!

Some 20 or so years later with a family of our own, we moved into a new house in a newly created community.

Here there was variety in house designs but only to this extent—three different styles repeated in seemingly endless trios stretching for blocks. On more than one occasion after pulling one of the children for a winter sleigh ride, I turned eagerly back to our house and couldn't find it. Somehow I felt hesitant about knocking on someone's door to ask "where do I live?"

That was a time when new communities were being created in many neighborhoods. I was never aware of decisions being made for the new home sites by anyone but the developers and City Hall. We were entering a time of speedy building with little time for, or interest in, consulting citizens.

Since then there's been an increasing awareness that a successful community can't just happen successfully.

The public, the users of the buildings and the surroundings must have a voice in it all.

Something that weakens the value and success of a community is stereotyping of ethnic groups who move in or want to. Stereotyping people holds no promise for success in changing behavior or attitudes.

The faster we are bombarded by changes in our society, the more crucial it seems to maintain and develop the stability of communities. We need to encourage human interaction in our neighborhoods as a new century looms close ahead. ®

June Sheppard is a regular contributor to First Reading. She is an honorary member of the Edmonton Social Planning Council and the first honorary member of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee.

In the Name of Community—Continued from page 7

sense of frustration, apathy, and sometimes despair. Some of us have even bought into the 'new way' and are busy developing mission statements and three year business plans instead of doing the work that is necessary. Nowhere, however, do you see people developing three year people plans. Nor do you see government officials talking with ordinary people in their towns. cities, homes, workplaces or neighborhoods.

It sounds somewhat trite amid a growing wall of cynicism and apathy to say we should not give up hope. We must remember that people did not ask for this nightmare. We must get back to basics and start focusing on what it was that made the dream worth pursuing. Whenever we hear this government speak of 'the community,' keep in mind what it is really doing. It is taking a right-wing conservative agenda and dressing it up to appear as 'what the community wants.' Community agencies are thrown off balance by the new rhetoric and community advocates are left out in the cold because their vision of community never has and should not fit with the philosophy of conservatism.

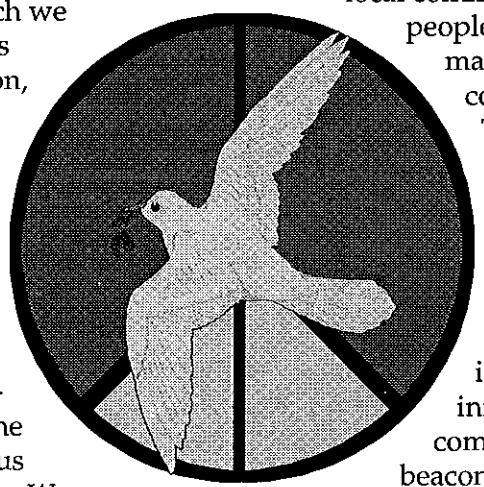
If we believe that women can take back the night, those of us who truly believe in community can start to fight to take back the word, and build a society where community needs are not lost to a govemment whose only task is to listen to a small powerful few who have always tried to dictate what the people want, but who have no desire or intent to ever address community needs. ◎

Christine Macken has worked in the community for over 10 years with special attention to children's issues. She is currently working with low income families in south west Edmonton to help them gain access to their community.

Local Students Gain Wisdom through Joint Effort

By Rashmi Joshee

"Peace is a word of great beauty and power. It has rung through these long ages never with such force as now because we find ourselves running out of time. We are children born of the dust of the universe formed and reformed until life itself began to shape and create this planet of which we are a part. We have behind us three billion years of evolution, hundreds and thousands of years of social and cooperative learning. We breathe through this power of this web of life that sustains us. This generation has begun to understand dimly the great experiment of cooperative learning, of interdependence that joins all of us. For the future is stealing away from us like the sands of an hour glass. We have been growing too fast and too carelessly and we have acquired the means to self-destruction and with it the taste for power and fear that drives this destruction on. We are within reach of understanding the true power of peace but unless we convert it into new directions our present course will lead straight to the end of human kind. Unless we can change our hearts and minds and actions."



These words taken from the *Gaia Peace Atlas*, although very dramatic, raise one very important point, namely that as human beings we are becoming more and more interdependent. In Canada our experiment in social and cooperative learning has facilitated the partial institutionalization of interdependence as in the case of our multicultural policy and our social safety net. But these areas of public policy are under siege, universality is being vilified and our ideals are being sacrificed to the god of money.

As this is happening, political forces are bowing to restraint and placing more onus on local communities which is causing people to look for new ways to maintain the integrity of their community and its values. This is a difficult period for all of us, but also a fertile environment for interdependent initiatives, and the explanation and implementation of new approaches. My objective is to talk about one such initiative in our Edmonton community which stands as a beacon of hope in our quest for peace and interdependence.

The Mahatma Gandhi Canadian Foundation was established in 1986. The objectives of the Foundation are to promote the philosophy of this well known advocate of non-violence, and peace to Canadians. Internally the organization did this through academic seminars, donations of books to libraries and through the development of symbols, for example the bust of Mahatma Gandhi located near the Edmonton Public library. Eventually, the organization moved to a more proactive stance, focused more on direct impact on a greater number of Canadians.

Increasingly, it became apparent that more and more people were fascinated with Gandhi and interested in learning about his philosophy and how it would work in the immediate and present day of our communities. After exploring through focus groups

where the most effective learning would occur it was decided that perhaps the target group should be students.

The first project was at an early childhood level. It was the development of a grade-one level book that spoke of the values of truth, co-operation and sharing at a level and through a medium relevant to children. Presently, the organization is developing a teacher's guide which goes with this book. The book is titled "Beely Bug Looks for Truth."

The next and perhaps more dynamic project was a conference for junior and senior high school students. The organization has always believed that much of Gandhi's philosophy is actually manifested in Canadian values of equality, diversity and community and that by transferring the action process which Gandhi advocated one can create a positive force for change. Simply put the goal is the same but perhaps how we get there can be done differently. Thus, the conference was developed as a forum for teaching young people how a philosophy like Gandhi's can be applied to problems that exist in Canada today. The process was not as quick as it may appear. There were many meetings and sessions involving high school teachers, students and board members and finally a format (the conference) and a subject matter (non-violent conflict resolution) were agreed upon. As the reader may well remember, violence in the high schools was high on the list of local problems. One hundred students gathered together, speakers were chosen for subjects such as violence, causes of violence and on Gandhi's philosophy. Facilitators were young people (university students) who expressed an interest in the subject matter and the learning process. All this hard work was video taped. The two days of tape were eventually reduced to 20 minutes to facilitate classroom use. With the assistance of a number of high school teachers a guide was developed to go with the tape and last winter the project was piloted in some of the high schools involved. The tape and teachers guide is targeted for use in Social Studies 20, and is now available. The conference experience for 100 students is now a reality for any and all high school students.

Dr. Hans Smits, a social studies teacher at Strathcona Composite High School, began working for the Foundation when it first started the focus groups. He helped develop the conference, the video and piloted the teachers guide. His beliefs in the work of the Foundation became so strong that he joined the board.

For this organization getting from start to finish was not an easy process. It involved a great deal of consultation, cooperation and sharing. The input came largely from the participants and the results were for the participants. Now, three years later, the conference is developed and run by students and the materials created are used in their own classrooms. The quote at the beginning of this article is on the video tapes of the conference and it, like this article, well illustrates how one small idea can impact at a much greater level. By creating a video and teachers guide, one small organization took a look at the issue of violence and provided an institutional support in its efforts to deal with this prevalent problem. This truly is interdependence and cooperative learning.

Rashmi Joshee is a board member of the Mahatma Gandhi Canadian Foundation.

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Local Human Services—Continued from page 15

Neither is cooperation, or even collaboration. What is required is in fact **integration** or **consolidation.**

So what might local control, real community development, and integration or consolidation mean in a modern community setting? Here in Airdrie I believe we're at least starting to go in those directions. First off, we are the only city in Alberta to opt for unconditional funding rather than staying with the conditional F.C.S.S. funding. We have created a new funding program called the Airdrie Social Enhancement Program, which is fully funded by the City. The unconditional block grant, including what used to be the F.C.S.S. grant, is now simply part of the City's general revenue. Most of my counterparts in other cities tell me we're crazy to move in this direction.

The "programs or potholes" question will emerge, but is this not in fact the way it should be? If we have any belief in the representative democracy system, we must allow our boards and councils to deal with exactly that type of question. This is truly what community responsibility and local autonomy are all about. We've asked for it—let's use it!

Brian Maitland is the Social Planning Director of the City of Airdrie

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This book has been completely revised and republished with up-to-date costs of raising a family or living without a family in 1995. There are lists for basic necessities, sample budgets and tables to help people determine their income needs and spot over-expenditures.

The Other Welfare Manual - 1995 (Free)
This manual will help people who are on Supports for Independence or Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH). It outlines client rights, responsibilities and gives the latest rates and guides to obtaining service.

Copies can be picked up at Suite 41, 9912-106 Street, or mailed at a cost of $3 for shipping and handling. (403) 423-2031