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MARCH 2024

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM OUR COMMUNITY | VOL 12 NO 2 | FREE TO WOLSELEY & WEST BROADWAY RESIDENTS

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## Residents mourn loss by fire of community-minded apartment

By Bev Solomon  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



Five apartment residents were extracted from their exterior windows while tenants and neighbours watch below on February 11 at 85 Furby. Photo Ember Boulay

Fire broke out at 85 Furby Street February 11, adding to a long list of buildings damaged by fire this year in Winnipeg. "I was jolted awake by the fire alarm ringing throughout my building," wrote Ember Boulay about the incident that started on the fourth floor. "Initially unaware of the severity, I ventured out to investigate, only to be greeted by the acrid scent of smoke

upon opening my door. As I joined others outside we witnessed the alarming sight of people trapped on the fourth floor...." "It was a terrible, painful night," Boulay told The Leaf. What began as a 'dream come true' in safe, affordable housing for Boulay, ended in a nightmare in the wee hours with toxic hot flames.

The building suffered extreme fire, smoke and water damage. Some tenants had to be extracted through their windows by firemen on ladders and five were rushed to the hospital with smoke and burn injuries. All tenants of the 44 suite structure were now displaced, finding places to sleep in hotels, friends, or pulling up dec-

.continues pg 4...



Residents on Arlington Street worry about heavy traffic

## 'Don't shake my house apart, please'

### Residents say new Transit route will change street into 'thoroughfare'

By Terese Taylor

A group of concerned residents on Arlington Street are questioning the city's plans to create a feeder route in the City of Winnipeg's new Master Plan for transit down their road.

The planned changes could see their block have as many as eight transit buses per hour travelling on their street in the new plan to make bus routes faster and more consistent. The new north-south route #28 would start at Leila Avenue, travel down Arlington (with a few detours) until Wolseley Avenue, cross at Maryland bridge, continue south along Stafford to Grant Avenue,

turn west and travel up Waverly.

Residents said that although some had participated in consultations a few years ago, they hadn't heard about the suggested changes and many were unaware of the new plans that are set to be launched next summer.

Margerit Roger bought her house years ago when her section of the street formed part of the original number ten route that has since been re-routed to Wolseley Avenue.

"I bought a house on Arlington knowing that I'm on a bus route, know there are con-

continues pg 5...



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# FIRST WORD

## *'I discovered my favourite book series,' says teen reader, and other reasons students excited about annual fundraiser*

Cailin loves a series called Wings Of Fire. She first discovered the book at West Broadway Youth Outreach's (WBYO) Read-A-Thon. Now she has 15 of a total of 16 in the series and is waiting for the 16th to come out. She's also read

six of the seven graphic novels in the same series and might buy her 7th this weekend.

The annual read-A-Thon happens once a year every March (this year it will be Saturday March 16th) and is a chance for students to expand their word vocabulary and develop a love for reading.

Director Ken Opaleke says that one year one student read 63 books and the total number of books read by all the participants were 1017. Students from nine schools have been invited to participate in this year's event, and he hopes they will break their record.

One of his favourite sayings is something he heard from Mulvey School Principal

Peter Correia: "First a Reader, then a leader."

Opaleke has been working with Lawyers for Literacy for many years, and says it's a natural fit to support kids strengthening their reading skills. "It's one of the most important parts of becoming a lawyer," he said.

Beti, Marwa and Cailin interviewed several students about their hopes for the readathon. Most have the goal to read at least 10 books, but Courtney said she was hoping to read more than 30.

Another activity that happens throughout the year at WBYO is to read a book, and then go see the movie. Most of the time, says Cailin, the book is better. Her favourite books are about talking dragons, and "it's an escape," she says. "It helps me relax and helps my creativity, to explore new worlds through books."

But some of the participants said they are also looking forwards to the read-a-thon because of the pizza!



**Beti (from left), Marwa and Cailin used their literacy skills to get comments from students to write this article. Photo of budding journalists by Terese Taylor**

Students, like Mikaela, from the Ukraine, will be trying to learn to speak better English. Brett said "I've tried to read big books and learn

some things."

The read-a-thon will take place at Mulvey School from 10 am to 4 pm, and the community is welcome to join in

and help out. For more information, contact WBYO at 204-774-0451 or by email at [wbyokidz@gmail.com](mailto:wbyokidz@gmail.com)

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# COMMUNITY

... TRANSIT, from page 1

periences with that and wanting to support public and active transportation," she said "but what's very different is having 8 buses an hour instead of two or three every hour, and buses in two directions makes it very different picture. I never bought a house for that level of bus transportation," she said.

In a letter to The Leaf, Dhiwya Attawar and Greg Tonn

wrote they were "stunned to hear about the details" of the new proposed route, and hadn't heard them discussed in earlier consultations in 2021. The couple has lived on the street for 30 years, and are concerned that the changes would "transform our neighbourhood into a busy thoroughfare between Portage Avenue and the Maryland

bridge."

Sally Papso is a well known resident on the street who became known for her beautiful bus stop garden that she decorated for riders. She said she hadn't received any information from the city about their plans but heard concerns from neighbours who said they could see their walls shaking when large ve-

hicles drove by. "My biggest issue over the time (the #10 ran) was Water Main breaks, two or three of them in a row," said Papso. "They did dig up the whole side of my street, but didn't dig up the street as far as Westminster. Those are the people who are really concerned by the noise, rumbling, and shaking."

Kevin Sturgeon, Senior Transit Planner with the City of Winnipeg confirmed that up to eight buses would run hourly on the route, but said the transit plan and the road rehabilitation plans are separate. "But we do talk to each other," he said. "We have been in touch with our colleagues from the public works department about a number of issues and will make sure that they put a high priority on making sure they get fixed within the next few years but Winnipeg Transit doesn't have any control over those kinds of things. All we can do is make recommendations," he said.

Rachel Morgan said "I support the bus, and in theory I think it's great. But what we are concerned about is the street hasn't been rebuilt in decades. When heavy vehicles roll over some of the bad parts of the pavement it vibrates significantly. When we are in bed we can see the walls shaking. These are old houses with stone basements. Particularly if they go to buses every 15 minutes. Don't shake my house apart, please." she said.

Attawar and Tonn said they noticed that their street was cleaner, and had a lot less dust and air pollution when

the bus stopped going up their street. They are also concerned, along with other residents, about the ability of buses to travel north and south on the street due to its significantly narrower width compared to rest of the route, and questioned the effect such frequent service would have on the safety of children, people who work from their homes, and the sense of community on the street. Several of the residents said they couldn't imagine the buses travelling safely without all public parking being removed from their street, particularly during the winter months.

"The amount of traffic is going to be a problem if they don't do something solid to the road," says Papso. "It's not a major artery. This neighbourhood was made for homes and buggies. It's hard to drag it into the modern era."

Sturgeon said Transit's new plans would streamline bus routes and enable people to get "anywhere they want to go" more easily. "We are now working on the final tweaks for the route network and will be bringing a report to council this spring," he said.

He added that 7000 letters were sent to homeowners along new routes across the city, but that Transit still wants to hear feedback from affected residents. "I would encourage everyone to have a look at our website and route maps, see where the routes are going and let us know what you think," he said.



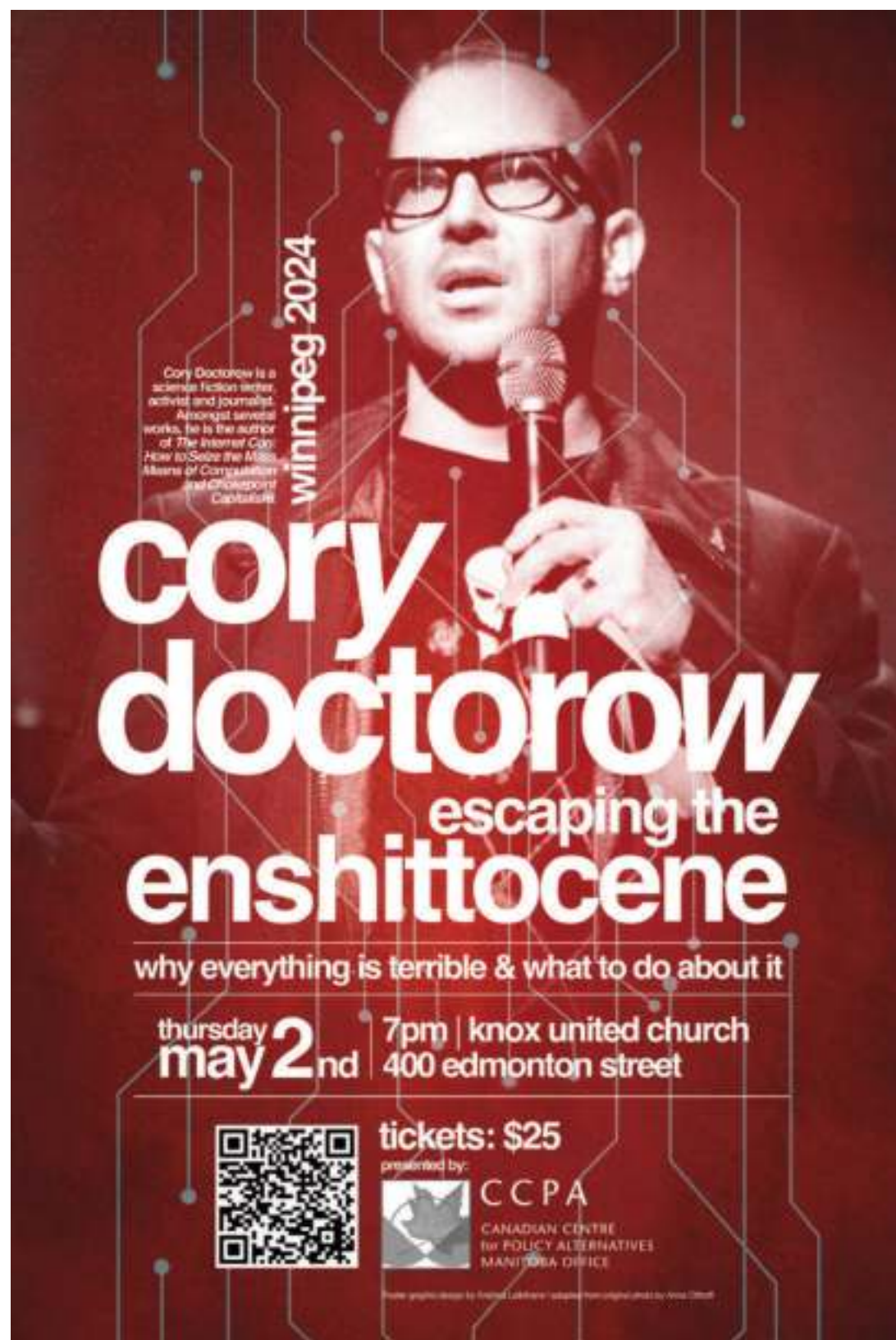
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Cory Doctorow is a science fiction writer, activist and journalist. Amongst several works, he is the author of *The Internet Cyn*, *How to Solve the Most Annoying of Computational Problems* and *Captivate*.

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Greg Tonn looks at the newly proposed route at an open house at the St. James Civic Centre.

# NEWS

...FIRE, from page 1

ades of roots in Winnipeg and moving north to family. The management company gave them one week to remove their belongings, terminated all leases and released a tight, happy community into the dark places of uncertainty and deep questions of what exactly happened and why they are suddenly left without clear support in finding housing.

Boulay was grateful for the open doors of neighbors and cups of hot coffee across the street that night, and the emergency bus that provided a warm place to wait out the containment of the fire. It was after 5 am, when tenants could go back and get medications and important documents. They were then driven to a hotel, and given emergency credit cards for food for the next three days with support from the Canadian Red Cross. After that, it was up to each one to call their social workers, EIA support or friends/family to help them find housing. Some tried to contact D7, the current management company to get more clear directions for what "was next," to pick up their belongings or simply to give forwarding addresses and phone numbers for damage deposits and mail or help with alternative housing but that has been difficult. "We, the former tenants, end up contacting each other to find out if we have heard anything more. It has been difficult to get a hold of D7, the management company, to get clear information of what's next," Boulay says.

Tammy Sutherland, a neighbor that invited many evacuated tenants that night, says the building standing there now empty is like a "black hole." "With all lights and activity



Flames break out on the fourth floor of 85 Furby. Photo Ember Boulay

suddenly gone, "it's a stark reminder of what happened" she says.. "There was always a clutch of people sitting at the front there, feeding birds and squirrels and replacing the water bowl for dogs on their walks. You could really sense the positive community of the place! Some tenants even came over to help me with my flowers and a trellis. They were always saying hi, and took time to talk which increased the sense of safety and well being to the whole neighborhood," Sutherland explains.

A few days after the fire, and closure of the building, she sent a letter off to Mayor Gillroy and Fort Rouge/East Fort Garry area Councillor Sherri Rollins, stating her concern about the tenants who have lost their housing and community support. She

wrote: "I am very concerned about the residents of the building and about affordable housing in our neighbourhood and city more generally. There are 42 units in the building, many occupied by low-income seniors, newcomers to Canada and folks on EIA. It's a stable, safe, friendly, and affordable place

to live, and it has a good reputation and impact in the community. People are in shock and grieving the loss of their homes and community. On the night of the fire, several people said they had nowhere to go once their emergency hotel stay concluded."

"Residents have expressed their concern that the building will now be converted to condos and/or renovated out of their price

range."

"West Broadway is in desperate need of affordable housing. With the recent closure of the Sherbrook Hotel bar and the rumoured closure of its associated accommodations (for all its flaws, it has provided low-income housing), the sale of the Lions Place facility to private interests, and now the loss of a five-storey apartment block, the community's housing situation is at a crisis

point."

Sutherland is hoping to hear back from city council.

Councillor Rollins told *The Leaf* "As Chair of the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee for the city, I advocate for housing on a municipal level to support the social workers' response as well as emergency care needed at the time of crisis. I also continue discussions with MLA's about their respective areas, in the area of housing and property development."

Boulay has been grateful for the support given so far, but is worried about the community members that he came to know in the block.

The trauma of losing almost everything and the safe housing unit he had has been tough mentally and physically. "I think it should be imperative to have a crisis counselor on hand, when the crisis is unfolding," he emphasized.

"Everyone would appreciate more support to find housing, as well as to get storage space for our things. I'm lucky I've landed in a friend's furnished basement. Not everyone is as lucky."

At the time of writing, the cause of the fire is still being investigated. D7 Property Management has also declined to comment.



Ember Boulay's former apartment (above). Boulay and neighbours are worried about tenants that have lost affordable apartments.



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# MAKING HISTORY

## A Ceremony to declare Riel First Premier

By Terese Taylor

"Welcome to your building, the peoples building," announced Premier Wab Kinew at the first act being passed by the new NDP government on Louis Riel Day, February 19.

Kinew said that it was important that the first Bill his government passed was The Louis Riel Bill. "Don't forget where you come from," said Kinew, "we have to acknowledge our history our heritage and the lineage that we come from."

"Louis Riel was the head of the first democratic government in Manitoba," he said. "But not only that, the rights he articulated set forth the vision for our province. A vision of equality, the right to speak French and speak other minority languages, he recognized Indigenous rights and the ability of all of us to live on together on these lands and make the most of our potential."

"Today as the Premier one of my titles is President of the



A photo of Louis Riel from a family collection shared by Ruth Swan. Photo Edward Jerome

Executive Council," said Kinew, clarifying that his position as Premier has also gone by the name that Riel

was most often known by.

David Chartrand, long time president of the Manitoba Metis federation (MMF)

gave an emotional speech before a new portrait was unveiled of Riel, and thanked Kinew. "Obama, I call him that. Obama of the First Nations," he said of Kinew, and during questioning afterwards said if Kinew hadn't been elected, he was not sure that the declaration would have happened. He praised the government's commitment to adding more significant Metis history to the Manitoba curriculum.

Chartrand called it a moment of truth that will bring a shift in Canadian politics. "Imagine for a second that that's how they looked at us? The Metis people a great partner to Canada, instead of the opposite, traitor, madman, the position of Canada to make him look like a villain. Not the right to protect free trade, the right to protect our land."

"We waited 153 years for royal assent, the inclusion of education to be changed."

Chartrand said learning

more Metis history will show the foundational principles that guided Riel's leadership, and the sacrifices he made to protect the people of Manitoba. He also pointed out that Riel, and many Metis had to flee persecution in the aftermath of his formation of the provisional government. "There was an exodus after 1870," said Chartrand. "We were homeless in the rockies. Where did we fit in? He made the French language to be protected. Riel supported immigration."

"He believed their was so much land and opportunity here," said Chartrand, and noted that Riel was a very young man when he took the helm of the province. "He was 24, 25 years old."

Chartrand put the youth on call, and said he would never forget this day. Looking around the room at the many elders and dignitaries in attendance he said "this is just the beginning of change... look at our bald heads and grey hairs, you will have to pick up the torch," he said.

## Great great uncle becomes third Premier

By Ruth Swan

The week of February 19, 2024 was an historic time in Manitoba. Premier Wab Kinew promised during the election campaign that he would recognize Louis Riel as the "first honorary Premier of Manitoba." When he was Leader of the Opposition Kinew had submitted a Private Members Bill that was defeated four times. Once elected, the Bill received all party support and Royal Assent in December 2023.

Many people who attended English-speaking public schools in Winnipeg 50 or 60 years ago were taught the typical British view that Riel was a rebel against the Crown, and the Canadian Confederation. They were not taught the Franco-phone perspective held by Riel's relatives and friends. Although I am non-Indigenous, I have been educating myself for 40 years about First Nations, and Metis history and culture in the Red River Valley.

My great-great uncle, the Honourable Robert Atkinson Davies, was designated the "second Premier of Manitoba." My partner Edward Jerome is a Metis descendant who can trace his ancestry in archival records back 224 years. He is a direct descendant of the fur trader Alexander Henry the Younger, a bourgeois with the Northwest Company at Pembina from 1800 to 1808. Henry's Ojibwe wife was known as "the Daughter of the Buffalo," and later, as "Betsy Henry." Betsy's sister, Julie Henry, was the mother of Ambrois Lapine, Riel's Adjutant General in the Provisional Government. Riel's intention was to unite delegates from all the Red River Parishes to agree to a "Bill of

Rights" as the basis for negotiation with Canadian representatives in Ottawa in the spring of 1870. It was unfortunate that Canadian Protestant newcomers from Ontario opposed this initiative at local consultation. Riel formed a Provisional Government and successfully obtained agreement to the Manitoba Act which passed in parliament on May 12, 1870. It is for these accomplishments that Louis Riel is now recognized as the first Premier of Manitoba.

Two days before the official unveiling of the new portrait of Riel, two friends and I had visited the room where the ceremony would take place to take photos of uncle Robert Atkinson Davis. The Davis family has an oral history of uncle Robert arriving in Winnipeg in May 1870 when Riel was holding the Upper Fort. At the time Canadians were not given permission to enter the Red River settlement without a pass from "Mr. Riel." Davis was raised in Eastern Quebec on a Homestead Farm by his parents. He could speak French and was not judgemental about French Canadian Roman Catholics, and their Metis kin. My grandmother recounted that Davis left his wife in Pembina, and took a horse and wagon to the Upper Fort without being stopped by the Metis Cavalry. When the guard said in

French "who goes there?" he identified himself in French. When he met the President, Riel asked: what is your purpose here? David stated: "I am coming to take up land." Riel responded "if your intent is peaceful you are welcome here." He gave Davis the necessary pass. Davis collected his wife in Pembina. A local historian noted their arrival in Winnipeg on May 2. He bought a hotel on main street and ran a saloon. This oral history gives us an important insight into Riel's treatment of Canadians from Quebec who could speak French. My grandmother said it was important to learn French as "you never knew when it could come in handy." Davis was chosen Premier four years later. This de-

scendant of the now "third Premier" was pleased to describe the role Louis Riel played in the formation of the Provisional Government of 1869 to 70 to an audience of Scandinavian immigrant descendants.

I hope they now have a better understanding of the role played by this famous Metis leader in bringing Manitoba into Confederation

as the "postage stamp province."

*This article is a condensed version of a presentation by Ruth Swan at the Scandinavian Centre. Dr. Swan is a Wolseley resident, and a graduate in History from the U of Winnipeg and the U of Manitoba.*



Dr. Swan (right) at the Scandinavian Centre. Photo Edward Jerome

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# DEEP BREATH

## Fundamental principles of recreation

By Karen Gay

Over 40 years ago I was a member of the first cohort of the Recreation Studies Bachelor degree program at the University of Manitoba. The program is now called Recreation Management and Community Development, which makes explaining one's knowledge base a lot easier.

After graduating, and having acquired further education I went on to work in the fitness industry, and as a K-12 physical education teacher. From there I segued into Holistic Health and had a reputable practice for 11 years in Vietnam. In 2021, life events brought me back to Canada, where I am now in the process of re-establishing my practice and at the same time teaching one of the very courses I took as a first-year student in the Recreation department. Talk about coming full circle!

### Leisure vs Wellness

As I observe the course content from the perspective of a wellness practitioner, I find myself wondering if the wellness industry hasn't co-opted the words recreation

and leisure and gentrified them with the word Wellness.

There's no denying, Wellness is a buzz word. It is also a multi-billion-dollar industry. Recreation and leisure aren't as, well, catchy. When I hear the word recreation, I think of the community recreation centre I went to as a kid for baton lessons. Yes, I twirled the baton, my sister got ballet lessons, but it digress.

The community centre was where we went to put our skates on, and to warm up after a few laps around the rink, and if you had the money, buy some hot chocolate. For those of a certain age it was also the place you went to play BINGO. Although I'm using the past tense because I'm recounting my childhood experiences, I am fully aware these activities still take place at recreation centres all across Canada.

### Holistic Mandate

Beyond hot chocolate and BINGO, public recreation service providers are mandated to provide opportuni-

ties for individuals to engage in activities that are freely chosen, either physical, social, intellectual, creative or spiritual with the goal of enhancing their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the community, in other words, opportunities for wellness.

Have the fundamental principles of leisure and recreation been swallowed up in the commercial global wellness trend? Karl Spracklen, researcher and professor of Leisure Studies, states, "our leisure spaces and leisure choices are increasingly controlled, commodified and privatised." Spracklen insists that we need to fight this trend.

### The Forbidden Fruit

While leisure may seem like something most of us would like to indulge in, it almost seems forbidden, like the forbidden fruit that we are not worthy of, or something not attainable due to various constraints, time and money being the most common barriers. This raises the issue of equitable access to leisure. Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights states, "everyone has the right to rest and leisure."

With the many challenges we face in the world today, one might consider the topic of leisure to be less worthy of our attention. However, when we consider the role of leisure in its ability to serve as a coping mechanism for life's adversities, as well as it being, according to Aristotle, "a necessity, both for growth in goodness and for the pursuit of political activities," perhaps we should reconsider its importance in our lives, decommo-

diify it and study how to ensure its universal access.

I've just started the



Winter 2024 university term teaching "Concepts of Recreation and Leisure" and I'd like to take you along the three-month journey as we define terms, question social constructs, highlight accessibility issues, reflect on influencing factors, and contemplate philosophical viewpoints.

I hope you'll join in the discussion.

*Karen Gay grew up in Wolseley, and has travelled extensively, living in Vietnam for more than a decade.*

## Stone Soup Week Fundraiser

### Support local restaurants and Manitoba school meal and snack programs

WINNIPEG, MB:

The Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM) is hosting its annual Stone Soup week from March 11 - 17, 2024 in support of school meal and snack programs across Manitoba.

A media and soup tasting event will kick off Stone Soup week on Tuesday, March 12th at 12:00 pm. The event will be hosted by Rudy's Eat & Drink in partnership with CNCM. Soup made by several participating restaurants will be served. Entry will be by donation for the general public.

"Stone Soup is an event that people get excited about each year. It's a fun event where the community can come together to taste soup, and be part of something larger - supporting the schools in our communities," said CNCM chairperson Wendy Bloomfield. "We are thankful that restaurants and community sponsors are once again supporting our province-wide event!"

The week-long event, where restaurants create a signature soup and donate \$1 for each bowl sold to CNCM,

also has an online interactive map and voting page.

The public is invited to visit our Stone Soup 2024 page to view a list of participating restaurants and cast a vote for their favourite soup. Restaurants from all regions of the province are participating in the event this year to give back to their communities and win the coveted Best Soup award based on their region.

"The school programs who CNCM work with continue to be faced with increasing food costs, and increased needs from the students participating," said Bloomfield. "Funds raised from this event will stay in Manitoba to directly support school meal and snack programs."

With the recent announcement from the Province and investment in a universally accessible school meal/snack program, the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba will be supporting almost 400 school meal and snack programs across the province. These programs are accessed by more than

50,000 students each day from kindergarten to grade 12.

"We are thrilled with the recent announcement from the Province of Manitoba and the significant increase in funding that they have announced for school food programs in Manitoba. There is such a need in our province for not only food for these programs but equipment, infrastructure and staffing," said Bloomfield. "Seeing the way the community comes together during the Stone Soup week truly embodies the essence of the Stone Soup folktale."

For more information regarding the work of our organization, and for a listing of schools we support visit our website at [www.childnutritioncouncil.com](http://www.childnutritioncouncil.com).

For more information or to connect with a school program, please contact:

Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba

Phone: 204-202-1233

Email: [info@childnutritioncouncil.com](mailto:info@childnutritioncouncil.com)

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# COMMUNITY

## Doors Open; New mosque welcomes community in time for Ramadan

By Bev Solomon  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Beit Nabala has finally landed a new “home” in Winnipeg. The once prosperous Palestinian village destroyed in the 1948 Isreal-Arab war, is memorialized in a new mosque by that name on 325 Wallasey Street in St. James. Beit Nabala was the childhood town of Mr. Wajih Zeid, long time Winnipeg Food Fare grocer and businessman.

This year, Ramsey Zeid, his son and President of the Canadian Palestinian Association of Manitoba, and owner of Foodfare on Maryland has been diligently working on this important project. “It’s been open for 3 weeks now, and we are getting many families, older folk and young people...from 150 last week to 200 this week! Now they don’t have to drive all the way to Waverly or Ellice to meet for prayer or gatherings.”

Ramsey’s father noticed the building on sale last year, and decided to buy it outright for the Muslim community in the area. The upkeep will come from offerings and donations of those who worship there and will be open 7 days a week, for prayers, gatherings, and com-

munity meals. “Ramadan is coming up right now,” Zeid says, “people tend to stay here longer, even sleep over night. We are happy to accommodate all Muslims from different countries and cultures. This is what it is for!”

A board of directors is just being set up and as for spiritual leadership, an imam has been rotating between Beit Nabala and the other mosques in the city. He is hoping that they will be able to support their own imam and teachers in the future. They also have close ties with the other mosques in Winnipeg. While members had many good friends there, it was a long drive from St. James and adequate space was becoming a problem.

Zeid is comforted and enthusiastic about its future. He says, “This is so important to me, that there is finally a home for the many Musims in this area and that it is also a legacy from my father’s past that he can leave for future generations, the memory of his hometown kept alive.”



Ramsey Zeid proud to open doors to new mosque

## Tax cuts sexist

WINNIPEG

“The Manitoba budget annually comes out around International Women’s Day but is often missing an intersectional gender lens. Going back decades Manitoba budgets have made things worse for equality based on gender, and other intersecting differences, because since the early 2000s most budgets have included some tax cuts.” said Marianne Cerilli – Lead organizer with the Reweaving Support Project. .

“Tax cuts do double trouble,” continued Cerilli, “not only do they give more money back to people already with higher income they remove funding that could go to make Manitoba more equitable, safer and healthier. We need to do a cost benefit on the tax cuts, and see

the budget as a system of investment with investing in children some of the best investments with huge returns.”

The result has been the loss of billions of dollars of revenue that could have gone to make Manitoba more equitable, less sexist, less classist, less racist and more accessible to people with disabilities. We know that people who are disabled, LGBTQ2S, BIPOC are more likely to be poor and face violence. This is why Reweaving Support argues that tax cuts are elitist.

The project hopes to raise awareness that Manitoba must start investing in the social safety net and, therefore, in its population.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

As one who has lived at the former Lions Place since 2017 and as a member of the Residents Council, I felt it necessary to respond to the article (Community at risk at former Lions Place) in your February edition.

Gerald Brown mourns the loss of what was when 610 Portage was a 55+ building, with an on-site Recreation Director and a Tenants Resource Co-ordinator. However it was the Lions Housing Corporation that stripped away the 55+ designation a year before the sale. The possibility that Mainstreet Equity Corp. will hire another Tenants Resource Co-ordinator is nonsense.

The community at what is now Portage Commons still exists. It’s just smaller than it

was. We still know each other by name, we still look out for each other and that goes for the two young University of Winnipeg students who live across the hall from me. While there are fewer volunteers, the levels of dedication and enthusiasm remain the same.

I hope that the next time The Leaf decides to do an article on the former-Lions-Place-now-Portage-Commons you will talk to more than one resident to get a take on what it’s like one year later. Opinion pieces are not news. Change is a constant in life, along with death and taxes, and we all have to deal with it. At least by the time one is in one’s eighties, we have a better handle on how to deal with change

Rene Jamieson

THE LEAF  
SERVING WOLSELEY AND WEST BROADWAY

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ARE WELCOMED at info@wolseley-leaf.ca or by calling 204-771-3882.

The mission of The Leaf is to serve the residents of Winnipeg’s Wolseley and West Broadway neighbourhood by providing a free forum for the expression of relevant news and opinion.

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# NEW VISION

## Hotel and strip club becoming Pimicikamik Wellness Centre

By Mike Maunder



**BEFORE & AFTER:** Kam Khaira shows off completed room (above) and room being renovated to include wheelchair-accessible washroom (right).

The Balmoral Hotel has a family atmosphere these days – a big change from its days as an inner city hotel/ beer vendor/ strip club and drinking spot.

On one recent Thursday, the new drop-in operated by 1JustCity echoed to “Bingo” games in the basement, while parents and kids from Cross Lake, in town for medical appointments, sat down to lunch in the main floor cafeteria.

The new feel is a result of the conversion of the hotel by its new owners, who took over in November. They’ve closed the beer vendor, bar and VLTs; and are about two-thirds through renovating the rooms to provide accommodation for families and individuals from Cross Lake in town for medical appointments. (The location, Balmoral and Notre Dame, is a short distance from the Health Sciences Centre.)

The former Club Fantasy strip club in the basement is now the home of the social agency, 1JustCity, which operated for many years out of St. Matthews Maryland church. The agency started running out of the



new location in January, planning an array of programs to service the West

End, Central Park and Centennial neighbourhoods. Site manager Josh Ward is con-

sulting with local community organizations to explore what programs are most needed, and posters are inviting residents in the adjoining neighbourhoods to come in and contribute ideas.

So far they’re operating a food bank, Bingos and serving a hot lunch Tuesdays to Thursdays, from noon to 1 pm, with the drop-in open until 3 pm for coffee and conversation. The meals are delivered from the kitchen at their 1JustCity location in Osborne Village. One of the upcoming major renovations planned by the new owners is converting a large room into a commercial kitchen for 1JustCity’s use. They’ve already spent over \$200,000 converting an unused bathroom in the basement into a large wheelchair accessible washroom / shower.

One of the new owners, psychiatrist Antonio Paletta, explains that architects will shortly be planning two

other major conversions: the beer vendor’s conversion to a medical clinic serviced by a consortium of six doctors; and the addition of SPLASH, a chain of inner-city daycares for infants and toddlers,

“People I’m connected with are really supportive of this project,” he said, “because it’s such a good fit joining together needed services that support one another.” Paletta’s network includes a unique combination of doctors, entrepreneurs, and a collection of friends and relations, not the least of whom are members of his own family, well-known for the Winnipeg hotels they’ve operated over the years.

Paletta is in a three-way partnership with Winnipeg entrepreneur Kam Khaira and Pimicikamik Okimawin Cree Nation (Cross Lake). The partners have former experience operating a medical boarding home for northern



**Josh Ward and Desiree McIvor of 1JustCity at Bingo**



*(Left) Owners Kam Khaira (left) and Dr. Antonio Patella (right) stand with 1JustCity's Josh Ward (centre) in front of the large room they'll be converting to a commercial kitchen to prepare meals for 1JustCity's food program.*

*(Below) Josh Ward pores over a blueprint for the new kitchen with 1JustCity food manager, Jason Flood.*



families out of one of their hotels.

Khaira owns trucking and hotel businesses in Winnipeg. He met Antonio's father, Silvano Paletta, a few years ago when Paletta handed off a trucking contract to his firm. Khaira, who was sorting out contract details at 2 am with his drivers was surprised that Paletta also turned up at 2 am to make sure the new arrangements were working. "I was impressed by his work ethic," explained Khaira, and the two remained strong friends.

They've worked together on projects, including combining hotel and medical visits with Pimicikamak Ojibwain Cree Nation. When the Balmoral came up for sale, the idea of the wellness centre seemed a natural.

"This is not a financial

decision," explained Khaira. "It's more what we want to do to make life better for people."

He calls it a long-term project, on which they don't expect any financial return for five to ten years.

It takes a certain kind of businessman to make that kind of decision, and Khaira gives most of the credit to Antonio's father, Silvano. Silvano is his son Antonio's day-by-day manager of the project. He's there when the pipes burst. "He has a passion for helping people," explains Khaira.

Where that passion comes from is a whole other story. (See *Family at the centre of the Balmoral wellness project returns to its West End roots*, next page.)

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# HISTORY

## Family at the centre of the Balmoral wellness project returns to its West End roots

By Mike Maunder

Antonio Paletta, part-owner of the former Balmoral Hotel (now the Pimicikamik Wellness Centre), has left most of the day-to-day running of the renovation project in the hands of his father, Silvano, and their partner Kam Kharia.

Silvano describes himself as an entrepreneur – “I’m a guy that gets in and out of businesses,” he says, but his roots are sunk deeply into the soil around the Balmoral project. When Antonio took time off from his psychiatry practice recently to visit the project, Silvano took him a block south to visit the old grocery store at Sargent and Balmoral which played a big role in his formative years. “I swept this floor a million times,” Silvano said, as they exchanged greetings with the store’s present owner Satish

Abbi.

In the ‘70s Silvano grew up in this store, then called Paletta’s International Food Centre, and the story of what he learned there goes a long way to explain why he and his son are pouring their passion (and money) into converting the Balmoral Hotel into a wellness centre for the neighbourhood.

In a way, they’re just giving back to the neighbourhood that formed them.

It starts with Silvano’s dad (Antonio’s grandfather), Antonio, leaving war-torn Italy in 1954; struggling to make a living in Winnipeg; sending for his wife Maria in 1956, and together beginning to find success by opening a store on Notre Dame in 1961 across from the old Molson’s Brewery (now No Frills).

That was a year after

Silvano was born, named after the silva (forests) of Antonio’s beloved home. The family bought a house on Fountain Street, just west of Main and Higgins where Silvano and his older sister Vera grew up. “Life was hard,” remembers Vera, “but my parents worked just as hard.” Much of what they earned was sent home to Italy to support the family still living there. There were times when Antonio refused to buy milk because he suspected that the rest of the family, still in Italy, could not afford milk. By 1965, they’d saved

enough to be able to bring the family to Winnipeg. After a trip to Union Station on a cold December day, five-year-old Silvano and Vera suddenly had five older brothers and sisters.

Anna, 13, and Francesca, 11, were the closest in age. They have vivid memories of the contrast between their lives in Italy and now in the “paradise” that Winnipeg had been billed. First there was the snow – particularly the day in March a few months later when a legendary blizzard piled snow to the rooftops.

It was the height of the ‘60s youth culture. Anna remembers the go-go boots and mini-skirts in the window of Woolworths at the corner of Logan and Main.

In a family history of their Italian years, Francesca is described as always challenging her teachers at school and “in the streets, she was a public menace.” In Winnipeg, she quickly became a defender of her younger siblings Vera and Silvano. “We had to quickly establish ourselves,” she recalled. “There were some kids who called us ‘Wop’ but I took the guys down really quick.”

Fountain Street was a mixed residential-industrial area, houses bordered by big factories and many nationalities. Anna remembers the 98-year-old grandmother next door chopping her own wood. Anna wrote poetry, and was amazed by the huge library on William Avenue which became like a second home. (Anna went on to a successful writing career, including her novel/memoir of growing up in Italy, “Bread, Wine and Angels.”)

In 1970, when Silvano turned 10, the family relocated



(Above) Antonio with his father, Silvano, at the store, now owned by Satish Abbi behind the counter. Abbi has owned the store since 1997. He remembers how Silvano’s dad, Antonio, in his senior years, would visit the store every Saturday, sitting in a chair Abbi provided him, and presiding over this place that held so many of his memories.

(Right) A 19-year-old Silvano at the store in 1979. At the rear is his sister Frances.



Mom, Maria and Dad, Antonio with Silvano in backyard garden of their Fountain Street home.

Before the arrival of the family in 1965, Antonio and Maria rented out most of the rooms on Fountain Street, living modestly in a couple of rooms beside the kitchen. Many tenants were “like family.” Peter (holding Silvano, with Vera in background) taught Maria to make cabbage rolls.

Maria (right) with longtime employee Kay Kirk in the store on Notre Dame.



SCENES FROM THE FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM: (Left to right)





*Silvano counts many people beyond his traditional community as friends and part of "La Famiglia" Among them was city musician and longtime pickleball partner, the late Vince Fontaine; "I've had my ups and downs," said Silvano, "But Vince was always there for me."*

from the Notre Dame store to the Balmoral and Sargent store. A couple of years later they moved from Fountain Street to a bigger house at Bannatyne and Arlington to be closer to their Uncle Joe on Logan,

Paletta's International Food Centre was where they grew up. "Our parents placed education first," remembers Silvano, "But every day after school we'd be at the store." He and Vera, the youngest, had competitions sorting bottles in the basement. He stocked shelves, swept floors and delivered orders. "Mom would have all the bags ready and I'd deliver in the new seniors apartment that had just been built on Kennedy." He also had a Free Press

paper route on Langside, and knocked on doors throughout the neighbourhood collecting "starts" for the Winnipeg Tribune.

The Palettas found their niche serving and getting to know the many nationalities in the neighbourhood – Italian, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Jamaicans, South Americans, Filipinos, and others: salted cod, pigtailed, plantains, yams and the whole array of ethnic foods. Many of Winnipeg's most savvy shoppers, the artistic community, members of the ballet and Winnipeg Art Gallery shopped there.

They were a vital part of a diverse neighbourhood. Frances remembers the Jamaican lady who always cooked food she brought

them; the Greek lady who brought philo.; and an older gentleman who lived up four flights of stairs which she would climb each day so she could put eye drops in his eyes.

One time older brother Joe chased a man who'd stolen a steak and other food. He caught him, but the man pleaded that he'd just come out of jail and had nothing. Joe brought him back to the store, made him a sandwich and gave him more fruit. There was poverty, but there was richness too.

"Silvano was so in touch with that community," recalled Anna. "There were people with mental issues, down-and-out people. Silvano would bring them in,

give them some chores and pay them. He always wanted to help people. He'd honour them."

Silvano remembers the work ethic of his parents, the hard work and sacrifices they made for the family. "It was hard times," he recalled, "but, boy, did we reap the benefits."

By the end of the '70s, the family was moving out of the food business and into the hotel business.

But the '70s at Sargent and Balmoral, and in the house on Bannatyne, and at Daniel Mac and the many places in the neighbourhood – these were the days that formed his values. He remembers the places in and around the West End of the '70s –the hippie enclave, The Banyon Tree, at Sargent and Balmoral; the city's first Gondola Pizza; the fish and chips at the B&B Restaurant where Sister Mac School now is.

But mostly he remembers the people: the kids he grew up with: Joe

Albo, Adam Petrillo; the families who became like his own family, the Bovas, the La-moanicos, at Sorrento's, the Perrillas, the Tummillos; and above all –Antonio and Maria, patriarch and matriarch, Rosa, Salvatore, Giuseppe (Joe), Anna, Francesca, Vera.

All of them are "La Famiglia" –a fraternity of friends and family that has sustained him all his life and now carries forward into the next generation with Antonio, nieces, nephews, grandkids, and too many others to even begin to name.

"I learned that we may be from different areas but we're all one family – we support one another. I've had my ups and downs but they're there for me. You have to give back."

The wellness project at the old Balmoral is one way he's giving back to that neighbourhood of the '60s and '70s that nourished them all.



**1965: The family arrives. Dad holding Silvano and Vera; other children (L to R) Salvatore, Anna, Francesca, Rosa, Giuseppe (Joe), Mom.**



**Arrival of the family meant tenants leaving and the family living in all the rooms on Fountain Street. Silvano, age 9, with the family's first TV.**

# WANDERING

## The Cypruses

By Max Johnson

Quirky places make interesting destinations.

The homogenisation of the world can make for dispiriting travel. One destination starts to look exactly like another, and with the predominance of global brands, identical shops and “authentic pedestrian zones” litter the world’s branded destinations.

However, there are still plenty of places to head to escape this monotony, and the island of Cyprus offers a most inviting respite.

Split into two sections following the abrupt invasion by Turkey in 1974, and still harbouring much of the character of the forty-six years of British rule, the island is a wonderful mystery.

I had not, during my previous visit to Northern Cyprus, had time to visit Lefkosa, as the Turkish population call Nicosia, and I had very much wanted to see it for myself.

Nicosia is a contemporary Berlin in many ways. Split between the Greek and Turkish communities, and until 2003 extremely limited traffic was permitted between the two. The border is a large, well defended strip of land called the Green Zone, and cuts through the centre of the city with barbed wire fences, watchtowers, anti-tank ditches and concrete

walls.

There are only two crossings in Lefkosa, both for foot traffic. The rest of the border remains unyielding, and a perpetual reminder of the precarious state of tension that underlies the island.

Within Lefkosa itself, it is impossible to remember that only metres away lies another completely different city. My hotel was only about 200 metres from the line, yet no sounds or ideas permeated the air. It was a completely different land.

A most interesting land too, and for aficionados of dilapidated colonial architecture (as I am), it is a wonder. Beautiful buildings that have served many colonists abound; the Supreme Court itself has served as an Ottoman Governor’s mansion, the British Supreme Court and today the highest court of Turkish Cyprus. Lawyers today still affect the dress of the Old Bailey, wearing black gowns, ties and wigs as they argue their cases and drink coffee.

It is, in many ways, a land of coffee and lawyers.

Coffee shops abound. To the point that one can barely imagine the quantity of coffee that must be consumed; every street corner offers a cup or two, and most are their own “specialised” roas-

tery. And every other corner seems to have a battery of lawyers ready to attend to one’s every need, although it is difficult to imagine just how litigious this island must be to warrant such a phalanx of legal expertise.

Otherwise, the city is slow and measured. There is little hurry, much time for conversation and coffee, and a general sense of time passing quietly and unnoticed. It is a city that keeps ticking on, but not really moving forward; it treads water and encourages lassitude, a rather pleasant combination.

And so, wandering through Lefkosa, one has the feeling that the city has so many layers, but not all joined together. The history

and historical buildings are delightful; the central attraction is the 16th century Büyük Han (Great Inn), a massive structure built as a caravanserai for travelling merchants from the rest of the island and abroad.

Today, tastefully restored, the Great Inn currently houses several coffee shops, restaurants and souvenir shops. It seems to have served as an inn from its construction in 1572 until the British occupation when it was, in 1872, briefly turned into a prison. Later it became a refuge for poor families offering very low rental accommodation, and this downturn in its fortune finally led to its ruin. Until its restoration in the late 1990s.

It is also a fine place from which to start exploring Lefkosa and admire the restoration work that has been only spottily emulated in the private sector.

Wandering through the city’s back lanes and weaving through the older sectors of town is delightful and an epiphany. To see houses that somehow keep standing, keep families protected and maintain their dignity as they crumble is quite a revelation.

Houses that date back centuries prop each other up as old friends do, and continue to do their work, often aided with elaborate props.

It is a timeless scene, and one that characterises this charming city.



*A wonderful propped-up house in Lefkosa (left). Photo Max Johnson*

*Max Johnson founded the Great Canadian Travel Company and knows a great community when he sees one. He has family in Wolseley and continues to learn and explore humanity and all its dimensions through travel. His latest travel itinerations can be found at [maxglobetrotter.com](http://maxglobetrotter.com).*



*The cafes along the Greek Line border. Photo Max Johnson*



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# COMMUNITY

## “Bringing out the naughty, but in a good way”

### Sex positivity through an Indigenous lens

By Terese Taylor

Talking about S - E - X often feels a bit - or a lot - awkward, says Laverne Gervais. But the educator has been talking about healthy sexuality for many years, and is working with a program at Ka Ni Kanichihk to help break the ice, bring awareness, healing, and fun, to what should be a good part of one’s life.

Getting the conversation going is something that she knows is important — so who better than Aunties and Kookums (grandmothers) to get it started?

“Sometimes someone is drumming or beading, or they’ll have a cup of coffee,” explains Gervais about a drop in program Ka Ni Kanichihk Mino Pimatisiwin that runs every Tuesday and Thursday. “The Aunties will see what they need, such as testing or access to resources or to talk about their health. Once a month, we offer ceremonies.”

Go Ask Auntie began in June 2022, right around PRIDE celebrations, and Gervais says it was a response to hearing about what Indigenous people were experiencing when they tried to access health care.

“There has been so much shame and stigma hovering over people’s sexuality. A lot of it was implemented and enforced through residential

schools...we are trying to push against that and reclaim who we are, like the Two Spirit Pow Wow - and celebrating that space,” she says.

Manitoba currently has the second highest increase in HIV rates in the country, and is also seeing an increase in STBBI’s (Sexually Transmitted Blood Born Illnesses) such as Syphilis. Rates began to climb significantly around the time that COVID became an emergency, but STBBI numbers are continuing to climb.

The topic isn’t new, but Gervais and other educators are noticing that awareness of basic information such as how some infections are transmitted appears to be misunderstood. “There seems to be a serious gap,” she said. She remembers a ‘question that came up at a presentation. “Can HIV be transmitted like COVID? Thankfully they were brave enough to ask it,” she says.

HIV can’t be transmitted through the air, by touch or by kissing, but Gervais has seen people who have been isolated out of community contact because of their HIV status, and misinformation.

An increase in the use of intravenous drugs, and shar- ing needles is one of the

causes of HIV transmission, but another increase in HIV rates is happening more often through heterosexual sex - putting women at great- est risk. But Gervais says educators are hearing from young women that they didn’t think they could get it.

“We have babies being born with syphilis, and babies being born with HIV which is completely unnec- essary. Its sad and frustrating they are increasing. At one point we were saying there was a new HIV diagnosis every day. There is a lot of push right now to have both the federal and provincial government acknowledge the emergency state that it is.”

However, Gervais says there are many treatment op- tions for people affected by STBBIs, and its important to get the message out. “(HIV) is not the death sentence it once was,” said Gervais. “Many people live long full healthy lives when they get the treatment.” There are also preventative treatments available for HIV, and vac- cines available for some sex- ually transmitted diseases such as HPV.

Ka Ni Kanichihk began to expand it’s outreach soon after it started, adding visits

to the North End Women’s Centre, Sunshine House, the Mobile Over- dose Prevention Site operated by Sunshine House, Thelma’s House, and the West Cen- tral Women’s Resource Centre. At each place a nurse is available

for testing if requested and opening the doors to com- munication about sexuality can often go from nervous- ness to laughter.

“We have a very sex posi- tive mandate; harm reduc- tion, anti-oppression, cultural safety, body sov- ereignty. We try to walk our talk...Even though these are all viruses and we are deal- ing with some seriously chal- lenging times, at the end of the day, we have to keep in mind there is a positive as- pect to sex and sexuality that we also need to celebrate, and sometimes we forget that when things aren’t good. People are dealing with houselessness, or food secu- rity issues, a lot of negative- ness.”

“We do fun little things sometimes, like our aunties sometimes make chocolate genitalia, a penis or a vulva, and distribute that. And Kookums will help. People see sex and older people as kind of taboo.”



“Language too. Have we lost connections to our language? We can have fun with the lan- guage... and learn how to say things in Anishinaabemowin or Cree?”

Go Ask Auntie also posts positive messages on social media, and invites people to ask questions, learn about other re- sources in the community, or join in an event. Even to make a date with a partner to drop by.

Keeping it light, and posi- tive, is one of the ways the pro- gram hopes to connect to the community and turn around stigma and shame that may have prevented people from ac- cessing information and getting health care. Gervais says she is seeing some hopeful changes growing, especially with youth and artists who are “owning their sexuality, and bringing a playfulness to their expression of who they are,” including 2Spirit and non-binary youth.

“We like to bring out the naughty, but in a fun way,” says Gervais. “Its a fact of life.” For more information, go to #goas- kauntie.

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# JOURNALISM

## Media Matters

By Paul Moist



We hear daily of escalating war in the Middle East, Ukraine, Syria, and countless other spots.

How we hear about these conflicts, through the work of dedicated journalists, is often overlooked, as is the danger media workers face throughout the globe.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in early December cited the on-the-job death of 94 journalists, and the imprisonment of another 400 in 2023. Over two-thirds of the on-the-job deaths occurred in the Israel - Hamas war.

In mid-February Gaza-based freelance journalist, Mahmoud Mushtaha, wrote of the death of 122 journalists who have been killed in Gaza. He himself has been wounded and wrote recently in the Globe and Mail about

reaching, "...the decision to embrace my final moments with family and loved ones, recognizing that this might be my last moment in life."

Not only is journalism dangerous, but it is also a shrinking profession, as what were once mainstream media outlets, retrench and downsize. Late last year the CBC announced hundreds of layoffs. Early this year, Reader's Digest announced that its Canadian edition will cease publication after 76 years.

In mid-February, Bell Media, in their annual shareholder driven austerity, announced the layoff of 4,800 staff, ten per cent of whom are journalists.

The twin perils of journalists being murdered and their profession disappearing points to the fragility of

democracies throughout the globe.

Jailed Iranian activist, Narges Mohammadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize late last year. The Nobel Committee cited her, 'lifelong struggle in support of human rights and strong civil society.' Her daughter Kiana read a message from her mother at the award ceremony in Oslo, praising the role of international media in relaying the voice of human rights defenders around the world.

Mohammadi said, in the message smuggled from her prison cell, 'Iranian society needs global support and you journalists and media professionals are our greatest and most important allies in the difficult struggle against the destructive tyranny of the Islamic Republic government.'

Hong Kong publisher, Jimmy Lai, a British citizen, currently faces trial under China's harsh national security law. His alleged crimes center around his now defunct paper, Apple Daily, a pro-democracy paper, that regularly challenged the Chinese crackdown on Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement.

The British based human rights group, Hong Kong Watch said recently, 'As a prominent figure in the pro-democracy movement, Lai's detention sends a chilling message to all those who dare to speak out against the erosion of democratic values in Hong Kong.'

Our federal government recently sought to support Canadian news publishers through Bill C-18, the Online News Act, by way of requiring big tech companies such as Google and Meta to fund news outlets. The rationale that paying for use of news content on their social media platforms is justified, is very much contested terrain, and the success of Bill C-18 so far has been modest. But the goal of preserving and funding Canadian news outlets has merit and serves the public interest.

Preserving the safety of journalists themselves, and their profession, are important matters for all who equate the strength of our democracy as being very tied to the strength and independence of a vibrant media sector.

The power and clarity of journalism was never more evident than when Narges Mohammadi's 17-year-old son, Ali Rahmani, said to the Nobel crowd gathered in Oslo that his mother's, 'body is behind bars, but her pen and thoughts have burst through the walls and reached us.'

The truth, no matter how harsh or difficult to fathom, reaches us through journalists. We all have a stake in preserving independent journalists, and their outlets, to shine light into dark corners throughout the globe.

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# SECOND LAST WORD

## Sherbrook Inn closing is an opportunity

By Paul Moist

Last month the Sherbrook Inn vendor and beverage room closed. The residents who live in the hotel remain there for now, but there is widespread speculation that the building will fully close, permanently.

The former Westminster Hotel has existed at Sherbrook and Westminster for about 60 years. The hotel has changed hands on several occasions and is widely reported to be in a significant state of disrepair. While there are many pieces to the crime and drug problems in West Broadway, the Sherbrook Inn reflects both neighbourhood decline and rising poverty.

As one Furby Street resident said, the closure of the hotel would have "...a huge, positive effect on the community."

Free Press columnist, and Winnipeg School Division Trustee, Rebecca Chambers, captured the view of many in a recent article saying, "In a blinding spotlight of a very public and deep disgrace, good riddance to the Sherbrook Inn."

Jino Distasio, the Director of the University of Winnipeg's Institute of Urban Studies, applauded Chambers piece and raised the fact that Winnipeg is one of the last North American cities to rely on "single room occupancy" hotels (SROs) to house the poor and vulnerable, who have few other options.

Both Chambers and Distasio place on the public agenda questions about housing quality and community

standards, asking, can we not do better to ensure quality housing becomes a right for all citizens?

Our community would do well to begin talks now for a new vision for the corner of Westminster and Sherbrook, and we might consider Merchants Corner on Selkirk Avenue and how it evolved from a notorious and dangerous hotel and bar, into a community education and student housing center in the heart of the north end.

The former Merchants Hotel on Selkirk Avenue was a gathering spot for criminal elements. Residents felt immediate relief when it closed, some stating they felt their community became safer immediately.

Community consultations involving the University of Winnipeg's Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies, the CEDA Pathways to Education (a North End high school support program) and others, decided that the Merchants Hotel had to close.

Their vision was presented to and supported by the former NDP government led by Greg Selinger. The Hotel was purchased and revamped into an education facility which includes 30 units of fully subsidized student housing.

The University's Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies offers all its classes on site and department faculty and staff have their offices there. Classroom space

is shared with the CEDA-Pathways to Education program.

Merchants Corner represents what is possible when the community, government, the private sector, and strong educational institutions come together with a common purpose.

A similar vision is needed for the Sherbrook Inn site. The area has four strong, progressive women as its elected representatives. School Trustee Rebecca Chambers, City Councillor Cindy Gilroy, MLA Lisa Naylor, and MP Leah Gazan are just the kind of leaders West Broadway residents need to make a new vision come to life.

The Leaf wants to hear from you. Do you agree that a new vision for Sherbrook and Westminster is possible?

Do you have thoughts on what that new vision ought to be? Write to us, and we will share your thoughts with our elected representative and the pages of this paper.

Dream big. The citizens of West Broadway deserve no less.



  
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# LAST WORD

## Rise, Red River 'What theatre does'

By Terese Taylor



Tracey Nepinak is a familiar face for many; most recently she played the mother in Rosanna Deerchild's *The Secret to Making Good Tea at MTC*.

The set of *Rise, Red River*, will stun its audiences.

Often, a theatre set feels like an intimate window that shines a light on a drama unfolding in front of us. Sitting a little ways back, we get a view designed to keep our eyes on the characters, and to follow the sometimes complicated twists and turns of the plot.

But the new co-production by Prairie Theatre Exchange, Article 11 and Théâtre Cercle Molière will bring the audience in much closer.

In order to accomplish its unique setting, Cercle Molière has turned its stage sideways, and it runs the entire length of the room. It will have the audience on both sides of its stage, and will incorporate the length of both sides of the theatre as a backdrop for breathtaking moving images. The audience will be accompanied by a raven and it will feel like you are on the edge of a story.

The story of Winnipeg's rivers is so important, says actor Tracey Nepinak, (who is currently playing Hilda in *Acting Good* on CTV, and has many theatre credits to her name) that it remains one of our greatest symbols. It precedes us when people learn about our city, and has been a highway for people, culture and wildlife and industry.

In the case of director Tara Beagan, who hails from Calgary, Treaty Seven Territory, says Nepinak, "she just couldn't believe that we have to drag the red with hooks to find our women."

"I love Terra's writing and where it started from," says Nepinak. "She was wanting to do a piece about climate change. How we treat the land is reflected by how we treat Indige-



nous women, and that is where it stems from. It's a huge truth to be telling. I'm excited to have a discussion with audiences about that, to see if they see the connection. How much of that do we understand?" asks Nepinak.

"It's an amazing co-production, beautiful design, amazing writing. It's a beautiful story that needs to be told and heard," says Nepinak.

She is also starting to learn some Anishinaabemowin, and French, along with performers Caleigh Crow and Marsha Knight for the production, and in what might be a first for Winnipeg: subtitles, as often offered at Operas, will be displayed

alongside the imagery on both sides in the three languages.

"My character's job is to find them and let them have their story," says Nepinak.

"It will do what theatre does," she says, "it invites

discussion and provides thought about issues that are important."

Cercle Molière has created a Quiet Room for its theatre productions this year that will be open for people who may be trig-

gered by the subject matter before, during or after the show. More information can be found at cerclemoliere.com, or by calling 204-233-8053.

### Working for Wolseley

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