

Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education & Action Report - April 2021

First, we want to thank the Northern Spirit Regional Council for your ongoing financial support over our 25 years of existence, it means everything to us. Our first office was in Garneau United Church, and when it was gone we found a temporary home in the sadly missed Knox-Metropolitan a few blocks away, and since Garneau United Assisted Living Place opened, it has been our home. We are fortunate that, although this is mainly a seniors' residence, it is not a nursing home so, except for two weeks over Christmas and New Year, I have been able to come in to work. You who are familiar with the building know that our offices are quite separate from the residences and we almost have our own entrance.

I'm sure all our reports will have in common that COVID19 has had a serious effect on our programming. As a small not-for-profit society with only one part-time staff person we continue to be proud of what we are able to accomplish in spite of difficult circumstances. Our mission is to promote peace and facilitate interfaith solidarity among our members and our local, national, and global communities through educational programs, social action and modelling respectful pluralism. This vision is as broad as our membership base and we work toward promoting the embrace of diversity and reminding our members and partners, formal and informal, that people of faith (and of no faith but abundant good will) have something to say and a role to play in **all** matters pertaining to making our world a more just and humane one.

Update:

- Our partnership with the city called, "**Celebrating Our Faiths**", is a permanent display in city hall which changes every month to feature a different religious tradition. In January 2020, the Edmonton & District Council of Churches (EDCC) had a display for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity as usual. There was a new development starting in late 2019: city staff worked with NAIT students and reps from EDCC on an augmented reality nativity scene which was in place for Christmas. It was meant to be the first in a series. The second would have been for Passover in April 2020, but city hall has been closed since March 2020. In fact, we can't even get in to take out the Sai Baba display that has been there for more than a year.
- Monthly "**Lunch & Learn**" (L & L) talks have been successful programs since 2008 and sadly also had to stop. They have been replaced with Zoom presentations on different topics. We have had two, both well attended.
- "**Interfaith Explorations**" is a program of visits to different houses of worship. In early 2020 we visited the Eckankar Centre and Sacred Heart Church, and showed our "Building Bridges" video at McDougall United Church in early March. COVID has ended these too, for now, and they are being combined with L & L.
- The annual concert, "**Building Bridges Among Faith Traditions**" was shown on YouTube on February 7, 2021. We featured local entertainers from a diversity of backgrounds and

it was wonderful, as always. It is our main event to celebrate UN World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW, February 1-7) which included a well-attended poetry reading and film discussion. It has been 25 years since our incorporation, and many loyal and generous supporters gave monetary congratulations.

- We continued to support **Edmonton's Gender-Based Violence & Sexual Assault prevention** project by holding an excellent panel discussion in November with five diverse speakers.
- We have been part of the **Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative** since its inception; board member Rev. Audrey Brooks and I attended the plenary in September 2020, and we have made a donation to this important work.
- Our annual commemoration of **UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** was a live zoom panel discussion titled "Confronting Inherent Racism" on March 21st. It was a partnership with the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation and the Edmonton branch of the United Nations Association Canada.
- The annual celebration of **UN International Day of Peace, September 21st**, was held in-person in 2020 outside Government House, with speakers and the Raging Grannies. It was fantastic to be together on a beautiful sunny day, especially knowing it might not happen again for a long time.
- Always mindful of the Truth & Reconciliation "Calls to Action" we seek ways to be true allies in this issue, one of the most important facing us in Canada. Lewis Cardinal made a presentation to our March board meeting, updating the progress toward creating *Kichiy askiy* - Sacred Earth. Since 2006, the Indigenous community has worked with the city of Edmonton to create a municipal space where Indigenous people can hold ceremonies. We will support this vital project in every way possible.
- We sold almost 900 copies of the 2020 Multifaith Calendar to individuals, schools, hospitals (and gave some away to politicians, etc.). This is a wonderful Canadian educational resource. **2021 calendars are still available, at a cost of \$8.**
- We have partnered for twelve years with Rev. Audrey Brooks and the Unitarian Church in the Genocide Memorial Service in July, it will be virtual for a second year.

We are a membership organization, \$25 a year.

Please join us!

<http://www.edminterfaithcentre.ca/>