

The Burning Bush

Troy Davies, Chief Executive Officer



Summer is a sacred season. We are greeted by the full flush of life: green leaves, open petals and buzzing bees.

The long promise of our winter hibernation can be fulfilled. We enter the world hungry for connection, community, and life. Lifting many COVID restrictions will help this promise bear fruit.

Yet, even the hottest sun casts a shadow. For me, the shadow of this summer is news of the unmarked graves at residential schools, many of which were operated by the Catholic Church.

We all recognize the enormous pain this has caused, and continues to cause. As an organization and individuals, we all have an important role to play in reconciliation as we atone for the injustices of the past and build a new future together.

Recently, I heard the story of an Indigenous child in our foster care program. They had been in care from a very young age, with limited connection to their birth mother. Over time even this connection broke down. The child was disconnected from their community and culture. But, over the eight years they have been cared for by a CSS foster family and caseworker, relationships with extended family have been re-established. With love, attention, and time, bonds have been nurtured. The child began to blossom as their connection to their own culture grew. Birth-family members visited the child and plans are afoot for the child to visit the place of their roots this summer.

A family is the wellspring of God's infinite love. Today, this child is blessed enough to have two families.

I hope over the last days of this season you embrace all that summer offers, especially re-connecting with the ones you love and the beauty of creation all around you.

*Blessings,
Troy*



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CSS IN THE NEWS

Check out the links below to see recent news!

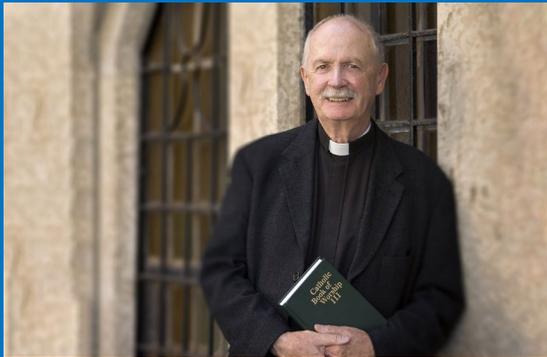
Heather Roberts honoured for lifetime achievement by Red Deer Sport Award Committee - <https://bit.ly/37krr0L>

St. Joseph Catholic School supports Edmonton area homeless - <https://bit.ly/3xlwatu>

The Fr. Mike McCaffery Centre

At their March meeting the CSS Board agreed to name the agency's new office in memory of Fr. Mike McCaffery, who died earlier this year. In his statement at the time Troy said of him, "If Fr. Bill was the father of the agency, then Fr. Mike was the spiritual uncle." It is appropriate then, that CSS will now have both a Monsignor Irwin and Father Mike McCaffery building.

This move will provide a beautiful, warm new space, one that will be welcoming to both staff and clients served. Children, Family, and Children Service staff are looking forward to being co-located with Community Outreach and Disability Service as this move will allow for increased learning, collaboration, and improved supports for a wide array of vulnerable children and families in need.



Return to Office Work

The province entered Stage 3 on July 1st.

Staff working in residences and homes will continue to comply with AHS regulations and health orders unless otherwise notified by their Service Area Vice President.

Many office-based staff, who are currently working from home, are wondering about the return-to-office plan for CSS. This is a question that all organizations are in the midst of examining. At this point, CSS remains committed to pursuing a hybrid approach, as was noted in the Alternate Work Arrangements document developed and shared with employees last summer.

However, in an organization as varied and complex as CSS there are many nuances to be accounted for, and a hybrid model has many possible variations. A Cabinet sub-committee has been established to thoughtfully study the issue, consult, and develop recommendations for the optimal hybrid model that will best serve our agency and its clients.

The committee has been tasked to bring forth recommendations in September and timelines will be provided so that implementation can occur in a manner that gives staff ample notice and time to adjust.



Payroll Question Period

On June 1, CSS hosted its first ever Payroll Question Period. The session covered topics such as the role of supervisors in approving pay, Kronos, payroll recruitment, and statutory pay errors.

A recording of this session is available on [Portal](#). If you have further questions, please continue to e-mail them to payroll@csslberta.ca so they can be entered into the new ticketing system.

Million Dollar Golf Tournament in support of Lurana Shelter

There are still spots open for this year's Rotary Club of Edmonton Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Tournament on August 9! Proceeds raised will be designated to Lurana Shelter.

Lurana is a 21-day crisis shelter operating 32 beds for women and their children who are in need of urgent, safe housing, providing refuge and emergency services such as meals, clothing, personal care items, transportation, and child care. Lurana Shelter is open to all women, with or without children, who are escaping violence and need a safe and secure place to stay.

CSS is working hard to end violence against women by helping break the cycle of abuse, uplifting women and children as they transition into their new lives, free from abuse. We are extremely grateful to the Rotary Club of Edmonton for choosing Lurana Shelter as the beneficiary of their tournament and for helping us keep women and their children safe.

More information and details about the golf tournament can be found on <https://bit.ly/3qOZkj5>. Thank you to the Rotary Club, for helping support vulnerable women and children in our community.





Faith's Offering

Words to feed your soul

Prayer to St. Kateri Tekakwitha.

“St. Kateri, model of confident love, continue to walk with us in the sacred circle of life. Help us to reverence the earth, the water and earth’s bounty for those who are yet to come. Protect our rights and our lands. Guard our families and heal our wounds. Inspire our children and watch over us forever.... May we grow in holiness and love so that, we too, with our last breath can say, ‘Jesus, Mary, I love you. Amen.’”

- By Sister Mary Clare Stack,
Spiritual Care Team

St. Kateri is the Patroness of Ecology, First Nations and People in Exile.

If you would like to participate in ongoing reflections on care for creation and social justice you can learn more at <https://www.starofthenorth.ca/programs/aurora-living/>

DSI Moment

Kirsten Anderson, VP of DSI

A reminder that the Digital Services and Innovation team has a new SharePoint site! Check it out for the latest IT and cybersecurity updates at <https://bit.ly/2Tumlf7>.



Staff Incident Reporting

A new Staff Incident Reporting App will be available soon! This app will allow staff to easily submit their information about an incident through the application. User guides and a frequently asked questions document will be posted to the Portal once it is up and running. All of us play a role in safe, and this app will help us to improve incident reporting for all staff.



Board Annual General Meeting

The CSS Board of Directors held their Annual General Meeting on June 24. Carole Anctil-Michalyszyn has been re-elected as Chair of the CSS Board. The Board also approved a change to agency bylaws which will now allow members to serve up to 3 three-year terms, extending from a maximum of 2 three-year terms. This will help build Board capacity and knowledge of the agency while balancing the need for introducing new members and good accountability mechanisms.

Staff Wellness

Summer Photo Contest!

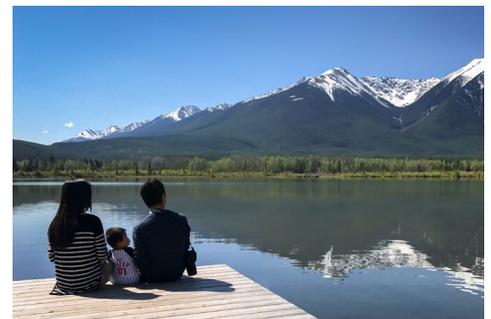
We are looking for photographs which record just how far you go in pursuit of physical well being this summer! It could be a photo of the view from the top of a mountain, of a beaver sitting atop a dam, or the stillness of a lake before dawn.

We'll post the best entries on the Portal.

The pick of the bunch will win a late summer picnic for two!

Please send your entries to:
communications@cssalberta.ca

with the subject line: Summer Photo Contest.



CSS SPOTLIGHT

Elpida Program

Each quarter, we'll spotlight some of the incredible work our staff are doing in our 90+ programs throughout the Agency.

This month we spoke to Kamil Rachwal, Program Manager of Elpida.

FOR CSS STAFF WHO ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE ELPIDA PROGRAM, WHAT IS THIS PROGRAM ABOUT?

Elpida, which is the Greek word for “hope,” is a community residential facility, more commonly known as a “halfway house,” which is federally-funded by the Correctional Service Canada. At Catholic Social Services, we operate four Elpida programs—three for men and one for women—where we help men and women, who are serving federal sentences for crimes they have committed, reintegrate into society. By being on parole, our residents are halfway in the community and still halfway in the institution. We contribute to public safety, but in true CSS fashion.

WHAT DOES THIS REINTEGRATION LOOK LIKE, AND HOW DO OUR STAFF MEMBERS SERVE THIS POPULATION?

The population that we serve is stigmatized greatly in our society. They are too often defined by the crime(s) they have committed instead of by their God-given dignity as human persons. First and foremost, our staff members treat our residents according to their dignity, and not according to their past actions. We believe there is hope (elpida) for these individuals to lead law-abiding lives, to grow in virtue, to create and foster new relationships in the community, and attain true happiness in their lives despite their broken pasts. We build relationships with our residents while maintaining strict professional boundaries. Public safety begins with our frontline staff, as well as the other residents in our homes. On a daily basis, our staff members are a source of rich support for our residents, who often have no other supports in the community. This support comes in different forms: we are a source of information for our residents; we offer emotional support during challenging times; we advocate on their behalf, and we keep them accountable by not enabling them in their former ways that contributed to their crime cycles. To help this population, you really have to know this population well; our staff members have a keen knowledge of the people we serve.

WHAT SURPRISES YOU MOST ABOUT YOUR WORK WITH ELPIDA?

Two things: the patience of our staff and the resiliency of most of our residents. Most of the population that we serve has been traumatized early in their lives. They have witnessed horror; they have been abused; they have witnessed the unbreakable break right in front of their eyes; they have committed acts they never thought they would have committed; and they have been shunned by most of society as a result. This is what they come to Elpida with. And yet, our staff do not judge them; they do not get angry or upset with them; they remain patient because they know them and love them. Despite all of the above, our residents want healing, and most of them will do everything they need to

do in order get their lives back on track, regardless of how society views them. This is truly amazing to witness.

WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU HAD TO ADAPT THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

In the best of times—outside of any pandemic—our residents face very difficult challenges to reintegrate successfully. The COVID-19 pandemic has limited their potential even more. We have had to put many more restrictions in place in an already heavily-restricted environment, in order to decrease the risk of illness in our homes for both staff and residents. For example, our residents have not been allowed to visit the private homes of their loved ones in the community or stay there overnight. But we have created opportunities for them to still visit with their loved ones in our programs in a safe setting, so that healing and growth can occur in broken relationships. We have provided technology in the homes for the residents to have outlets for support. And we consider all of their requests on an individual basis under their given circumstances. All in all, we have done our best to keep everyone as healthy as possible, while not shutting the doors for successful reintegration, and being creative in working within the mandated guidelines.

Want to see your program in an upcoming CSS Spotlight?

Email: communications@cssalberta.ca

Opening of Mistahi-maskwa

The Mistahi-maskwa (Big Bear) house opened in mid-June. The newest CSS program. This goal of this home is to provide individualized care to the child's/youth's complex mental health, behavioural, emotional, developmental, and trauma-impacted care needs. The home will help youth re-set their trajectory so they could be placed in group care, foster care or kinship care. A smudging ceremony and blessing was done as part of the opening event for this space.



"THROUGH OUR PARTNERSHIPS AT THIS HOME WE ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO WRAP SERVICES AROUND THESE YOUTH AND BE ABLE TO PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT LEVEL OF SUPPORT."

*- CHRIS SIMONSON,
VICE PRESIDENT,
CFCSS*

I love working for an organization that will do whatever is needed to help those who are most disadvantaged. Some of the women at Lurana Shelter come as foreign workers or as temporary residents—their intimate partner relationships became violent and they need to flee and seek refuge. The issue is complex because many times women are forced to go back to their country of origin. What makes it unimaginably difficult is when these women have children born in Canada, and they have to leave their children behind. Many of these women have little to no access to supports available, except for first stage shelters for abused women and children.



The following is a story that illustrates this struggle:

Brittney came into Lurana Shelter at the end of April after spending a few months couch-surfing, as she was fleeing a seven-year domestic violence relationship. Brittney came to Canada from another country as a Temporary Foreign Worker and found herself in an abusive relationship shortly after. Having two children in this relationship, she tried for a number of years to make the relationship work, however, the abuse only intensified. Unfortunately, due to the abuse that Brittney experienced from her partner, she was unable to maintain her work permit and lost her status in Canada.

After fleeing her abusive partner and having to leave her children in his custody, Brittney would often turn towards survival sex in order to support herself financially. When she entered the Lurana Shelter, she had no I.D., no valid passport, and no longer had any means to access a bank account. Prior to entering Lurana Shelter, Brittney was extremely vulnerable and at risk of being human trafficked from a number of men that had sexually exploited her over the previous years.

The staff team at Lurana Shelter assisted her with getting new government I.D., connected her to counselling, supported her in applying for the Leisure Access Pass, and made referrals to Action Coalition Against Trafficking (ACT). During Brittney's time at Lurana, she shared that she enjoyed painting and gardening and would often engage in these two activities while at the shelter.

The team at Lurana began to explore a number of housing options that would provide Brittney with the stability she would need to rebuild her life, however, all of the housing options were at capacity and did not have availability for several months. Fortunately, a one-bedroom apartment became available through another program, and Sign of Hope was able to financially support Brittney for one year in this apartment. This allowed Brittany to transition from Lurana Shelter to more stable, long term housing and begin her journey of healing and hope.

Just prior to moving, Brittney went to her new place to plant some flowers as a means of getting connected with her new home. Brittney moved in June, and is thrilled to have an apartment that she can call her own for the first since coming to Canada. She is filled with optimism that she now has a safe place where her children can visit her.

Want to see your work in a future edition of The Beacon?
Email: communications@cssalberta.ca

Opening of Camrose Four-Plex

The agency's Camrose four-plex, serving PDD clients, has opened and residents have begun to move in! The City of Camrose provided a generous grant for the property, which reduced the overall project cost. The building has many accessibility features which allow residents to access their home with ease.

There are fixed patient lift systems installed throughout the complex to help staff lift residents into wheelchairs, and a full-size elevator that allows residents to attend social activities in the party room and use the television room. In each of the four units, there is a large roll in shower designed for individuals in wheelchairs.

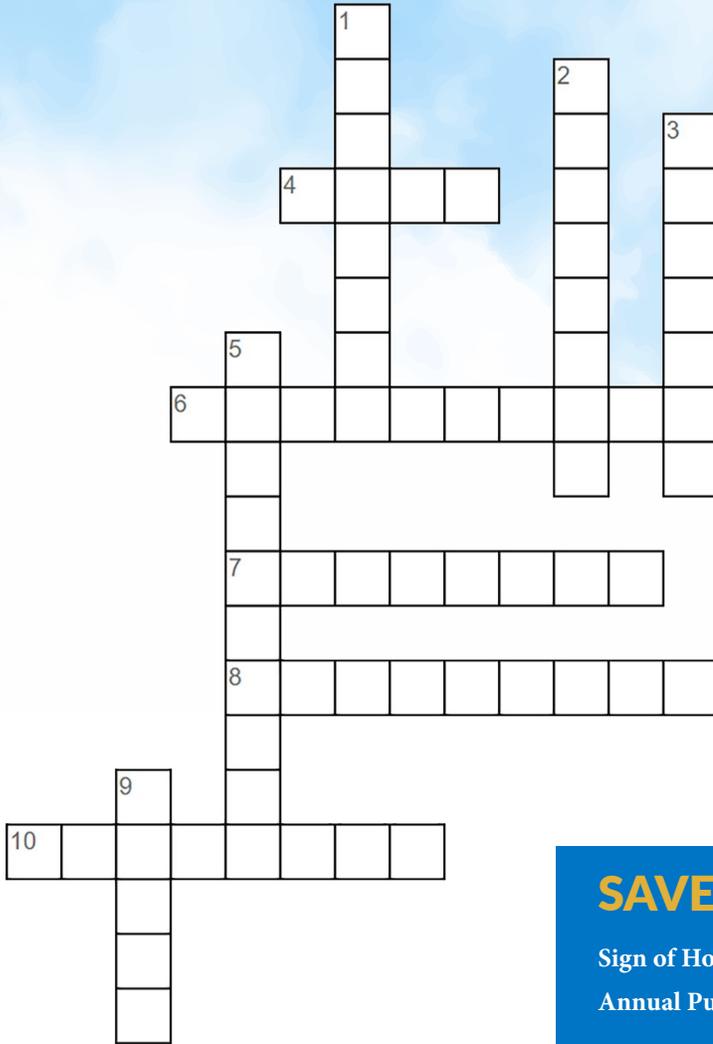
FASD Awareness Day

September 9, is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day. This date was chosen as it represents the nine months of pregnancy. FASD Awareness Day is a day dedicated to raising awareness about this diagnosis, prevention, as well as services to provide assessment, diagnosis and supports for individuals and families impacted by FASD. There are approximately 174,000 Albertans who have been impacted by FASD.

Catholic Social Services offers FASD programs in Edmonton, Wetaskiwin, and Wainwright.



SUMMER CROSSWORD



Across

- 4 Spot to take a dip
- 6 Red, white, and green fruit
- 7 What you cook smores over
- 8 Beach essential
- 10 What you use to cook outdoors

Down

- 1 When life gives you lemons make this summertime drink
- 2 Summertime sport
- 3 Over night trip in the woods
- 5 Structure you might build at the beach
- 9 Needs to be mowed

Submit your completed crosswords to communications@cssalberta.ca by **August 16** to be entered to win a Sign of Hope *Hopefully Cooking* cookbook! **Answers will be on Portal August 18.**

WINNER OF CROSSWORD

Congratulations to Denise Plesuk for winning the spring crossword! Great job Denise!

CONTEST!

SAVE THE DATE

Sign of Hope – Fall Campaign launch – SEPTEMBER 22
Annual Public Meeting – OCTOBER 14

The Market @ GiannaYEG OPENING DAY



Women in the Gianna Centre have opened a new public market. The agency's first social enterprise, supported by CWL volunteers from the local parish.

