

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

ON THE COVER  
CITY HALL DISPLAY FEATURING THE  
2022 MULTIFAITH CALENDAR



# EDMONTON INTERFAITH CENTRE FOR EDUCATION & ACTION

# IN MEMORIAM



## PAULINE PAULSON'S (OBM)

Final display in City Hall, August 2021.

Her comment: "I guess I could have taken my mask right off."

## PAULINE PAULSON

The Edmonton Interfaith Centre and indeed all of Edmonton has suffered two great losses. The first was Metis Elder Pauline Paulson on December 25, 2021. She was born and lived her young years in Northern Manitoba, adolescence on a farm in the central part of the province and the balance in Winnipeg. In Edmonton she divided her time between Native Counselling Services as a spiritual and cultural advisor, the Elders Counsel for Concordia University, and Elder in residence for the HIV Drop In Centre. Her formal studies included a diploma in Applied Counselling from the University of Manitoba, another in Child Family and Community Services through Red River Community College (Winnipeg) sponsored by Metis Child and Family Services, and the facilitator training program “In Search of Your Warrior” through Native Counselling Services of Alberta. Her informal education included over 30 years of participation in aboriginal ceremonies and learning from various Elders, locally, nationally, and internationally. She said, “I believe Spirit led me so I can fulfill the reason I was born into this world at this time”. Pauline served the Centre in many ways, including the roles of Vice President, President, and most recently as wise counsel to the current President and Board as Past President and in 2021 chair of the Nominations Committee. Her advice was critical in the planning of the 2018 North American Interfaith Network conference which we hosted here.

## SUSHIL KALIA

On January 6th, 2022 we lost a founder and Honourary Board Member Sushil Kalia. He came to Edmonton in 1976 and soon became involved not only in the Hindu community but interfaith education and dialogue as well. In the early 1990's he was instrumental in the work of several groups, one was the Edmonton Interfaith Network which inaugurated an annual observance of the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21st, (still one of our signature events). In the fall of 1995 at the Welcome Chapel at the Royal Alex Hospital he was one of the signatories to our provincial application to register as a society in Alberta. He was a founder and honourary priest of the Hindu Cultural Centre (HCC) and for over 45 years conducted rites of passage there. His skills as a draftsman were also used in the design of the temple and beautiful murti (statues). When we began our joint program with the city called Celebrating Our Faiths in 2006 he helped make the first display featuring Diwali. In 2012 he created a room in the HCC dedicated to Swami Vivekananda who attended the first Parliament of the World Religions in 1893 and is credited with bringing Hinduism to North America.

# OUR VISION

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The Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action is recognized as a vital organization that addresses faith issues locally, nationally, and globally. We model a solidarity that embraces both the diversity and commonality of faith groups.

# OUR MISSION

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The Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action promotes peace and facilitates interfaith solidarity among our members, and our local, national, and global communities through educational programs, social action, and modelling respectful pluralism.

# EDMONTON INTERFAITH CENTRE FOR EDUCATION & ACTION

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The Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education & Action was founded in December 1995 to promote respect, friendship, harmony and interfaith solidarity between people of various faiths. Our vision is as broad as our membership base; 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.

Our actual incorporation became official on March 19, 1996 so we are formally 26 years old. Survival is hard for small not-for-profit societies and we are proud of the support of both individuals and organizations. We grew out of a few local initiatives such as the “Edmonton Inter-Faith Group” in 1987. That is not so long ago but we have come far; the sort of dialogues and public prayer services with which many of our founders were involved years ago were a novelty at the time and we are pleased and proud that, due in part to our work, the uniqueness has worn off. In fact as we continue to promote religious literacy we look forward to a time we might not be needed, when the embrace of difference and recognition of it as a strength will be taken for granted.

Our programs aim to help people live together as good neighbors and we have lay and clergy members from many different religions with representatives of a dozen on the board alone. We have implemented a wide variety of projects, large and small, from an hour long to four full

days, local and international. All have brought people together to discuss critical issues facing our communities. These include lectures, prayer services, dialogues and presentations; the Centre also works to raise awareness about local and global prejudice and to model a non-discriminatory lifestyle. On an ongoing basis we provide speakers to schools across Edmonton, addressing the diversity of religious expressions found in the community. The Centre facilitates visits to houses of worship both for children and adults and coordinates interfaith prayer services throughout the year. We have hosted the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) Connect conference twice, presented workshops both locally and internationally at every NAIN Connect for over twenty years, and at four Parliaments of the World’s Religions.

We are particularly proud of our partnership with the City of Edmonton. Since 2006 we have had a permanent, changing display at City Hall called “Celebrating our Faiths”. We have also implemented or created material such as the two peace posters created by local graphic designers, a booklet, “Seeking Peace...Visions of Peace from Twelve Faith Traditions”, the “Walking Together” curriculum, and the “Faith in the Classroom” component of the “Safe and Caring Schools” booklets used by the Alberta Teachers Association. The Edmonton Interfaith Centre looks forward to continuing to serve the community through the two arms of education and action.

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# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

JUNE 1, 2022 HELD AT THE UNITARIAN CHURCH, 10804 – 119 STREET, EDMONTON

- ▶ Devotional – Virginia Sharek
- ▶ Approval of Agenda
- ▶ Minutes of last AGM, June 2, 2021
- ▶ President’s Report
- ▶ Coordinator’s Report
- ▶ Treasurer’s Report
- ▶ Committee Reports
  - Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative
  - Celebrating Our Faiths
  - Gender Based Violence
  - Genocide Memorial Service Invitation – July 10, 2022
  - Lunch & Learn
  - Membership
  - North American Interfaith Network
  - United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination - March 21
  - United Nations International Day of Peace - Sept. 21
  - World Interfaith Harmony Week

The following members were elected or re-elected last year (June 2021) and are willing to serve their second year: *Eileen Bell, Audrey Brooks, Lewis Cardinal, Karen Gall, Archit Gandhi, Farah Jamil, Kathie Reith, Manish Shah, Karnail Singh & Rebecca Wright.*

The following members have completed the second year of a term and are willing to serve another term: *Jagjeet Bhardwaj, Guy Blood, Avau Fast, Shiraz Kanji, Nasim Kherani and Virginia Sharek.*

Leaving the board are Len Gierach and Kimberly Lang. We thank them for their service, especially Len who is “stepping away” after serving in various capacities since 2006.

Election of Officers of the Board - Nominations are open

- President - The Nomination Committee recommends Farah Jamil
- Vice President
- Treasurer - Nasim Kherani continues her 2-year commitment
- Secretary
- Past President - falls to Guy Blood, as the previous President

Any New Business

**Program: Members discuss the 2021 Parliament of the World’s Religions**

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON ZOOM JUNE 2, 2021 MINUTES

*Attendants: Helen Arnott, Eileen Bell, Guy Blood, Audrey Brooks, Lewis Cardinal, Yvonne Collinson, Keith Dannacker, Larry Derkach, Karen Farkas, Avau Fast, McKenzie Fleming, Karen Gall, Archit Gandhi, Len Gierach, Shulamit Gil, Shiraz Kanji, Paula Kirman, Kimberly Lang, Don Mayne, Beth Mackenzie, Kara Murray, Dawn Parker, Pauline Paulson, Netta Phillet, Kathie Reith, David Ridley, Jane Samson, Jitendra Shah, Virginia Sharek, Shaykh Sheikh, John Wright, Rebecca Wright.*

- ▶ Devotional – Rev. Dr. Don Mayne
- ▶ Approval of Agenda moved by Karen Gall, seconded by Karen Farkas, passed
- ▶ Minutes of last AGM, July 15, 2020 moved by Virginia Sharek, seconded by Audrey Brooks, passed
- ▶ President’s Report
- ▶ Coordinator’s Report
- ▶ Treasurer’s Report
- ▶ Committee Report
  - Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative
  - Celebrating Our Faiths
  - Concert
  - Gender Based Violence
  - Genocide Memorial Service Invitation – July 11, 2021
  - Interfaith Explorations
  - Intergenerational Dialogue Series
  - Lunch & Learn
  - Membership
  - North American Interfaith Network Connect-2021 & 2022
  - United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination - March 21
  - United Nations International Day of Peace - Sept. 21
  - World Interfaith Harmony Week

All reports accepted as information.



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING CONTINUED ON ZOOM JUNE 2, 2021 MINUTES

### Nominations and Approval of New Board Members - CHAIR PAULINE PAULSON

Board members are elected for two-year terms. The following members were elected or re-elected last year (June 2020) and have indicated their willingness to continue to serve one more year: *Jagjeet Bhardwaj, Guy Blood, Avau Fast, Len Gierach, Shiraz Kanji, Nasim Kherani and Virginia Sharek.*

The following members are completing the second year of their term and present themselves for election for another two-year term: *Audrey Brooks, Karen Gall, Farah Jamil, Pauline Paulson, Kathie Reith, Manish Shah and Karnail Singh.*

The executive committee, once ratified by the membership, will be:

**President – Guy Blood**

**Vice-President – Farah Jamil**

**Secretary – Virginia Sharek**

**Treasurer – Nasim Kherani**

**Past President – Pauline Paulson**

Leaving the board: thank you to Kara Murray who has served two terms on the board and been our very able treasurer, and Dr. Zohra Husaini, member since 1999! She will become an honorary board member. We wish Zohra and Kara all the best in the future.

Joining the board are *Eileen Bell, Lewis Cardinal, Archit Gandhi, Kimberly Lang and Rebecca Wright,* welcome.

We continue to value the contributions of our Honourary Board Members:

*Rev. Dr. Rob Hankinson*

*Sushil Kalia*

*Rev. Dr. Don Mayne*

*J.V. Mehta*

**New Board and Executive: Approval moved by Pauline Paulson, seconded by Don Mayne, passed.**

**Any New Business – none** Minutes submitted by *Virginia Sharek*

**Adjourned to Program - “Meet Some of Our Life Members”:** *Karen Farkas, Paula Kirman, Beth Mackenzie, Jane Samson, Jitendra Shah, Shaykh Sheikh, John Wright.*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT GUY BLOOD

Activities in the past year have again been fairly restricted, but we have still accomplished a lot. For details, please read our Committee Reports included here. The activities of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre are initiated and carried out by the volunteer members of our committees. They do an excellent job. The COVID restrictions have had a mixed effect on the attendance, with some greater and some lesser numbers attending. Having to stay home makes it easier to just turn on a computer and join a Zoom event rather than travel to a location, but the stimulation of an in-person meeting is missing.

We've again worked with other organizations in presenting public events. We've joined with the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation, the Indo-Canadian Women's Association and the Edmonton Branch of the United Nations Association in Canada. The interfaith movement is more widespread now with the Lethbridge Interfaith Network, the St. Albert Interfaith Connection and the Strathcona County Diversity Committee all creating community and harmony building events.

We've been following developments at the Parliament of the World's Religions. They are planning the next major event for August 2023. Registration is open already and anyone can make a proposal to be a part of it. We have not heard if the approved federal government's Bill C-15 for the inclusion of indigenous rights into Canadian law has made any progress or not. We are monitoring the IF20 meetings that gather information from faith communities and deliver that to the major governments of the world at their annual G20 meetings.

We're working with the City of Edmonton to make sure all faith traditions are welcome and included in our community. The Alberta Minister of Justice has asked us to identify issues in the Police Act that cause faith communities some concern.

The Centre is an active member of the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) and our members have attended and participated in planning meetings. Two people from the Centre board also serve on that of NAIN.

Our efforts at improving the website are ongoing. We regularly post on Facebook and Instagram. Many of our zoom events have been placed on the website for public viewing. **Please see the links in the individual reports.**

## COORDINATOR'S REPORT NETTA PHILLET

We are pleased to be able to report that we continue to thrive in spite of COVID. There have been a few outbreaks here in the Ashbourne (Garneau United Assisted Living Place) where we have our office but I've not been prevented from coming to work. As were all residents and staff, I was tested regularly and continue to wear a mask when not in the office. We are busy with over 30 emails a day, all of which need at least an answer, often action. Much of my 20 hours a week is spent on clerical duties and helping all committees whose events are covered in separate reports.

Let me tell you about a few unique happenings over the year.

In June last year two RCMP officers visited us, a man and woman, his gun was visible in a holster, she kept hers in her purse. Guy\* and I took them to the front desk to be checked in and temperatures taken as required because the building was closed to visitors; the ED happened to be there and began scolding us for having "guests". Then she saw his gun and said, "O he can go wherever he wants". The officers work on public engagement with the Integrated National Security Enforcement Team, we had an interesting discussion and were pleased to hear that they share our concerns about domestic terrorism.

Since last April city manager Andre Corbould has been holding Zoom meetings on critical issues like community safety. Guy and I have attended with representatives from several faith traditions. It is affirming to hear City Chaplain Rev. John Dowds and Julien Hammond from the Catholic Archdiocese mention our Centre as playing a leading role in this important, ongoing dialogue.

On our behalf I applied for two grants in the last year. Our oldest annual funder is the Northern Spirit Regional Council of the United Church. Since their major restructuring a few years ago, an extensive application form must be completed. We are grateful for their ongoing support.

The Edmonton City Operating Grant is the largest source of unrestricted funds as you will see in the financial report. It was particularly challenging this year with a new questionnaire entitled "Outcomes Reporting", asking how we ensure equitable access and inclusion for those who might not be able to participate, due to financial barriers for example. Specific questions referenced women, LGBTQ2, seniors and other "underserved populations". I was able to demonstrate that our programs are for everyone and offered at no cost. We are proud of this.

It is an acknowledgment of our expertise that our advice is sought on questions of protocol for events such as the swearing in of the new city council, and the Alberta Government's "Demise of the Crown" plan, meaning what to do when the Queen dies. There isn't much precedent on record since it hasn't happened for 70 years.

In November "Just One World" was held again, a sales venue for local non-profit groups. After a 2-year hiatus the shoppers were happy to see us. Kathie\* and I spent the day there, talked to dozens of people and sold some of the popular Multifaith Calendars. The real value is exposure since we don't have enough opportunities to meet the public. And it's fun. Overall we have sold more than 700 of the 2022 calendars to individuals, schools and hospitals (and given many away to public figures, etc.). This rewarding task takes a lot of my time in the fall: contacting previous customers and seeking new ones, invoicing with one of our three payment options, arranging for mail, delivery or pick up. It is a wonderful Canadian educational resource and we are pleased to be the distributor for all of northern Alberta.

## COORDINATOR'S REPORT CONTINUED NETTA PHILLET

At the end of December we had a casino and in spite of the busy season, raging Omicron and minus 39 degree temperatures our wonderful volunteers filled all the shifts; what great members we have! We are so grateful for their support.

Manish\* suggested we hold an interfaith prayer service for peace, which was held on April 3rd at the Unitarian Church. Their new minister Rev. Rosemary Morrison was very welcoming. Thanks to Eileen's\* media savvy two TV channels covered it. We often cynically say that peace is not newsworthy and it's gratifying to know there are exceptions.

I've been helping the recreational director of the Ashbourne plan monthly presentations with a religious theme for the residents. Attendance has been low but it is important. Eileen arranged for a very entertaining couple to come and talk about Easter with musical accompaniment and Farah\* made an in-person presentation about Ramadan. She prepared a power point that basically offered Islam 101 and then took questions from the audience.

We were all saddened to lose two board members. Sushil had been unwell for a long time but Pauline's passing was a shock. Since before COVID we met monthly to sign cheques over tea and had wonderful visits. I always learned something and will cherish my memories.

I continue to be very proud of what we are able to accomplish as a small not-for-profit society with a tight budget and one half-time employee (me!). As always I thank you for your support over the last 16 years.

\*denotes a board member

## TREASURER'S REPORT NASIM KHERAN

Once again we are able to report that both our operating and casino accounts have healthy balances. Casino proceeds allow us to pay panelists and speakers for their expertise as well as the rent and most office expenses.

We are grateful for the wonderful support we received from the Northern Spirit Regional Council of the United Church, our largest faith-based donor, and the Edmonton City Investment Operating Grant, our largest grantor. We would also like to thank Project Ploughshares Edmonton, the Edmonton Community Foundation, Eckankar Canada, the Unitarian Church of Edmonton, the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation, the Ukrainian Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Western Canada and the Jain Samaj, as well as many individual donors. Overall donations were much less than last year because we didn't have a concert, maybe later this year!

## AUDIT STATEMENT

Fiscal Year 2021 - 2022

**To the Members of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education & Action:**

The Board of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre has chosen Jagjeet Bhardwaj and Len Gierach to review the 2021 - 2022 Financial Statements.

**Accordingly they have reviewed the TD Canada Trust records, cheques, deposits and bank statements for two accounts:**

Operating Account # 0873 - 5203980 and

Casino Account # 0873 – 5223027.

**We believe that the “Income & Expenses” statements and the “Balance Sheet” accurately represent the financial position of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022.**

**In common with other membership organizations, we could only verify income as deposited.**

**Signed:**

**Jagjeet Bhardwaj**

**Len Gierach**


**Dated May 24th, 2022**

**EDMONTON INTERFAITH CENTRE - Operating Account**

**APRIL 1st, 2021 to March 31, 2022 - Income & Expense**

**Income**

City of Edmonton Grant	11,734.00
Project Ploughshares Edmonton	7,348.07
Sales Revenue (Calendars & Posters)	6,341.73
Northern Spirit Regional Council United Church	4,375.00
Donations from Individuals	2,348.80
Membership Dues	1,775.00
Edmonton Community Foundation	1,221.00
Eckankar Canada	1,000.00
Unitarian Church of Edmonton	400.00
Ukrainian Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Western Canada	250.00
Jain Samaj donation	150.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$36,943.60</b>

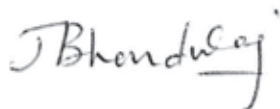
**Expense**

Salary	28,603.08
Genocide Memorial Service	323.50
Office	61.39
Paypal Charges	93.93
Bank Charges	7.50
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$29,089.40</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$7,854.20</b>

**Reviewed and Approved by**

**Jagjeet Bhardwaj**

**May 24th, 2022**



**Len Gierach**

**May 24th, 2022**



**EDMONTON INTERFAITH CENTRE - CASINO ACCOUNT**

**Income & Expense - April 1st, 2021 to March 31st, 2022**

	<b>DEBITS</b>	<b>CREDITS</b>
DONATION from CMEF for IDERD		200.00
FROM AGLC FOR CASINO ADVISORS' FEE		2,427.95
CASINO ADVISORS	2445.45	
2021 CASINO PROCEEDS		76,279.94
RENT	14289.00	
DONATION - Capital Region Interfaith Housing	4000.00	
WEBMASTER	3018.89	
OFFICE	1855.77	
INSURANCE - PROPERTY AND DIRECTORS & OFFICERS	1742.00	
SHAW & TELUS	1954.47	
PROGRAM - three "L & L" HONOURARIA	600.00	
FORMAT ANNUAL REPORT	525.00	
PWR REGISTRATIONS PAID (four)	457.69	
PROGRAM - UN INT. DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION	400.00	
ZOOM ACCOUNT FOR ONE YEAR	210.00	
MEMBERSHIP IN EDM. HERITAGE COUNCIL (three years)	120.00	
NEW CHEQUES & BANK CHARGES	249.10	
	<b>\$31,867.37</b>	<b>\$78,907.89</b>
<b>Balance Forward April 1, 2021</b>	28,115.23	
<b>Credits</b>	78,907.89	
<b>Expenses</b>	31,867.37	
<b>BANK BALANCE MARCH, 2022 - FISCAL YEAR END</b>	<b>\$75,155.75</b>	

**Reviewed and Approved by**

*J Bhardwaj*  
**Jagjeet Bhardwaj**  
May 24th, 2022

**Len Gierach**  
May 24th, 2022

*Len Gierach*

**EDMONTON INTERFAITH CENTRE BALANCE SHEET  
MARCH 31st, 2022**

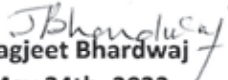
**ASSETS**

TD Bank Regular Account	38,845.55
TD Bank Casino Account	75,155.75
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$114,001.30</b>

**EQUITY**

Restricted Funds	75,155.75
Unrestricted Net Assets	31,224.43
Net Income	7,854.20
GST	-233.08
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>\$114,001.30</b>

**Reviewed and Approved by**

  
Jagjeet Bhardwaj  
May 24th, 2022

Len Gierach  
May 24th, 2022





## CENTRAL REGION INTERFAITH HOUSING INITIATIVE (CRIHI)

REV. AUDREY BROOKS

The Edmonton Interfaith Centre has been involved since its inception with the creation of a 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness and provide “Housing First”. It stresses that this work is the responsibility of all Edmontonians. At the beginning of the project Netta and I attended an organizational meeting with representatives from Catholic, Christian Reform, Jewish, Lutheran, Muslim, Sikh, Unitarian and Salvation Army faiths. As a result these groups partnered with Homeward Trust and federal, provincial and local governments to provide homes with social supports to help those who are housed succeed in their new homes. Over 10,000 persons have been housed, and those who drop out for various reasons are able to come back in. A “Welcome Home” program supported by Catholic Social Services consists of volunteers who visit and socialize with those who might have left all that is familiar and need to feel comfortable in a different community and hopefully learn a new healthier lifestyle. At present CRIHI ambassador, Pastor Michael Van Boom, is raising funds so we can continue our work and new initiatives to build stronger neighbourhoods through multicultural friendship groups.

## CELEBRATING OUR FAITHS NETTA PHILLET

Since 2006 we have enjoyed a unique partnership with the City of Edmonton, prompted by a comment to then Mayor Mandel that City Hall belongs to all citizens, and should reflect the diversity of religions found here. It is a successful program which advances our mission and that of the city, to be a place of inclusion. Keeping a new display moving smoothly in and out each month is challenging and rewarding. Due to COVID City Hall was closed to the public for almost a year and a half, it reopened in August 2021 and has featured:

- Creation Stories from Turtle Island
- Islam Awareness Month
- Hannukah
- Eckankar,
- United Nations World Interfaith Harmony
- Jainism

## FOURTEENTH ANNUAL GENOCIDE MEMORIAL SERVICE

REV. AUDREY BROOKS

### Invitation - Sunday, July 10, 2022

The annual Genocide Memorial Service began as a witness to violence committed against human beings because of war, greed, ethnic cleansing, slavery, gender bias, colonial expropriation of land and people, religious persecution, neglect and political oppression that resulted in the deaths of family members. Each year people from all nations are invited to come, tell their stories and place a stone in a dry riverbed with the name of their family or country. This year's theme is "Every Child Matters", for if the children are killed the nation ceases to exist. Plans so far include: Lewis Cardinal to speak about kichiy askiy (Sacred Land) to be created in Edmonton; Sofia Yaqub from the Shaama Centre to speak about violence against women and girls; Satya Das to speak about Daughter's Day; Jasmina Colic to speak about her son who was taken from her at Srebrenica; Metis poet Naomi McIlwraith to talk about bringing the children home. The Ubuntu Soul Singers will sing, "Angel Wash," for the little ones.

We hope to have a Ukrainian speaker and choir as well as two other singers. **All are welcome at the Unitarian Church of Edmonton, 10804-119 Street at 10:30 a.m. Sunday, July 10th, 2022.** For more information please call facilitator Rev. Audrey Brooks 780-489-8842. Sponsored by the Edmonton Interfaith Centre, the Unitarian Church of Edmonton and the Westwood Unitarian Congregation.

## MEMBERSHIP

Having members from all religious traditions is very important and we have 3 categories: Member, Life Member, and Organizational Member. Currently, we have 131 members of whom 42 are "Lifers", generous supporters who have paid ten times the annual dues of \$25. We are able to offer a tax receipt for this. Our website has a membership page and easy to use payment buttons and a list of categories, fees and benefits. With the world opening up we look forward to attending more in -person events which will allow us to talk to the public and tell our story. **We only exist because of you and thanks to you!**

## LUNCH & LEARN NETTA PHILLET

COVID ended our lively noon hour meetings but after a few months we began holding them on Zoom. As with some other programs covered in this report it isn't only a story of loss, the ease of joining from home is very appealing to many of us, time of day or where we are in the world doesn't matter. Since the last report we have had these speakers and topics:

- Rabbi David Kunin with his fabulous photos of Bali
- Helen Arnott about Sacred Sites in Northern India
- Radomir Bilash - 130 years of Ukrainians in Western Canada
- Lewis Cardinal on the creation of kichy askiy (Sacred Land)
- Firdosh Mehta "What is Yalda?"
- Kate Quinn & Kathy King - Buying Sex, Who Really Pays?
- Pierre Rousseau - Religious Education
- Dr. Marie Gervais and her book "The Spirit of Work".

All have been recorded and can be found on our website

## NORTH AMERICAN INTERFAITH NETWORK (NAIN) LEN GIERACH

[HTTP://NAIN.ORG](http://NAIN.ORG)

The annual NAIN Connect was held in November 2021 via Zoom. It is hoped that the organization will move to a "hybrid" or "in-person" format again in the future. It is now composed of a "working" board of directors and a "Council" which is responsible for the visioning and direction of the organization.

All are welcome for their input. In the current year membership fees for individuals, organizations and institutions have been waived. Our own board member Lewis Cardinal will be serving as vice-chair of the working board and attended the May 1st Annual General Meeting as the delegate of the Interfaith Centre.

## | GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

JAGJEET BHARDWAJ, GUY BLOOD, KATHIE REATH

On November 24th we partnered with the Indo-Canadian Women's Association to mark Family Violence Prevention Month. Harriet Tinka, a spousal-abuse survivor, titled her story "A Future with No Violence" and delivered the message that domestic violence cuts across race, religion, and colour; domestic violence can happen to anybody. It was a Zoom presentation viewed by 27 people.

Ms. Tinka, a former model who has graced the covers of a variety of magazines, told the audience she suffered verbal and physical abuse at the hands of her then-boyfriend. She discussed the patterns of an abusive relationship:

1. The abusive person treats the victim like royalty and makes them feel special.
2. The abuser isolates the victim from their friends and family and is jealous of them. The abuser "brainwashes" and "controls" the victim.
3. The abuser physically and verbally abuses the victim and then apologizes. After saying sorry, the abuser tells the victim they love them and that the victim's actions caused the abuse.
4. The final step in the domestic abuse pattern is to kill the victim. Ms. Tinka recalled that she was nearly murdered. When treating victims of domestic abuse, Ms. Tinka said hospital workers should follow the acronym.

### **SAVE:**

Stop whatever they are doing and listen.

Appreciate what the victim is experiencing by being empathetic.

Validate that the victim's feelings are normal.

Explore the next step, which may include calling a women's shelter, the police or a friend of the victim.

Those who experience domestic violence should never be afraid to tell people what they are facing at home, Ms. Tinka said. They should not feel desperate and they should not blame themselves. She said victims should speak with a friend, family, or a co-worker as soon as possible and get out of the abusive relationship.

## UN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

REV. AUDREY BROOKS

For many years we celebrated the UN Day of Peace on Sept. 21 outside city hall but in 2021 once again we side-stepped all protocols and permissions and met at Government House Park. It was lovely to be together on a beautiful day, Paula Kirman and the Raging Grannies sang.

## UN INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (IDERD)

GUY BLOOD, REV. AUDREY BROOKS, KAREN GALL

On March 21st, 1960 in Sharpeville, South Africa there was a massacre by police of 69 unarmed civilians who were peacefully demonstrating against the discriminatory 'pass laws'. In 1966 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed this as a day of remembrance. Canada was the first country to support the initiative, making it an annual campaign in 1989. For many years we have commemorated the tragedy. With the ongoing COVID19 pandemic we were again unable to meet in public so once again we collaborated with the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation (CMEF) and the United Nations Association in Canada, Edmonton chapter (UNAC), to present a panel discussion on Zoom with an audience of more than 40. This year's program, held on Sunday, March 20, was titled "Racism: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go?" We heard from esteemed participants, Charis Auger, Stephen Camp, Satya Das and Salima Versi who shared their knowledge and experience with us. Mayor Amarjeet Sohi brought greetings from the City and offered the Land Acknowledgement. We are grateful for the added participation of Interfaith Centre president Guy Blood and CMEF president Beryl Scott who welcomed attendees. Nimir Raval from UNAC moderated the program. Dr. Michael Frishkopf introduced the Soundscapes from the University of Alberta Aga Khan Garden and provided beautiful musical selections. Tech support was provided by CMEF program coordinator, Lan Chan Marples.

Racism - What do we know and where do we go?  
<https://youtu.be/B7uQ2aja4ec>

## WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

EILEEN BELL, GUY BLOOD, LEN GIERACH, KATHIE REITH

This year we had an increase in proclamations from various levels of government. Highlights included a film discussion, presentation of spiritual poetry based on the “The Big Questions”, a Baha’i Open House and an evening multi-faith discussion on prayer. We were able to show the “Building Bridges” documentary by Zoom to four Rotary Clubs as a community peace-building initiative. The full 14 minute video and trailer are both available on our website. It has been shown to ten different Rotary Clubs in the region between January and end of June 2022. Let’s continue the momentum and see how this project can be a further catalyst for interfaith dialogue and celebrating the work of our Centre.

Please note that our colleagues and friends based in San Diego have been promoting Interfaith through the World Interfaith Network (W.I.N.) <https://world-interfaith.com> since they hosted the North American Interfaith Network Connect in 2017. They have planned a multitude of events every year in August, this year by Zoom from the 7th to 13th . Check it out and share your ideas with the planning committee for WIHW 2023.

IHW2022: Poetry Open Mic - February 5, 2022:  
<https://youtu.be/a0Q1iT1wphM>

## ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE

EILEEN BELL

We were pleased to have Mayor Amarjeet Sohi open our Annual Open House on Wednesday, December 8, 2021. The mayor shared greetings from the City of Edmonton. The event was held online over Zoom, because of COVID precautions. EIC president Guy Blood gave a wonderful overview of the past year. We also had members of the centre speak about holy days and celebrations that took place in November and December of the year. Diwali, Hannukah, and Christmas were among those that were discussed. The entertainment included two children singing the Christmas carol “Away in a Manger.” As all good open houses do, we had plenty of time for mingling and visiting with everyone in attendance after the program ended.

Open House video link:  
<https://www.edminterfaithcentre.ca/eic-annual-open-house-december-8/>

## BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

**Eileen Bell** has lived in Edmonton since 1984, when she began working at 630 CHED Radio as a news anchor and is the radio news manager for Corus Entertainment Edmonton. She has been in broadcasting since 1978 and loves the many roles she has had over the years. She spent 24 years volunteering as the communication director for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for central and northern Alberta. She currently serves as the national social media manager for the Church in Canada. She has been a member of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for many years, including several previous terms on the Board of Directors. She believes the more we learn about various faiths, the more we learn to understand each other. Originally from Montreal, Eileen is a graduate of Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. She golfs very badly but enjoys it very much. Her family is spread across Canada, and she loves going to visit them.

**Jagjeet Bhardwaj** is a retired scientist who now devotes her life to full-time volunteer work. For the past thirty - five years she has volunteered for many organizations including the Girl Guides of Canada, Red Cross Society, the Marian Centre and the Millwoods Welcome Centre for Newcomers. Mrs. Bhardwaj is also a member of the Provincial Court Nominating Committee of Alberta. She is a recipient of the Centennial Medal from the Province of Alberta in recognition of her multifaceted volunteer work. She has also been honoured by the Indo-Canadian Women's Association, with whom she has served as president and is currently treasurer for a third term. She also edited several publications for them. She has been nominated for the YWCA Tribute to Women of Distinction Award.

**Guy W. Blood**, M.Sc., P.Eng. has been a member of the Baha'i Faith since 1979, after an extensive search of all possibilities of committing to a spiritual path within a religious community. He has been interested in interfaith harmony for many years and demonstrated that interest early on by producing a weekly community television show in the early 80's, titled Unity in Religion. People from all faith traditions were interviewed using questions that focused on the similarities amongst religious traditions, rather than on the differences. That show ran for 3 years on local cable channel 10. Guy has functioned as a structural engineer since graduating from the University of Calgary with a Master of Science degree in Civil Engineering. Work included designing bridges and buildings, providing educational seminars on cement and concrete, teaching at NAIT, and most recently, structural engineering consulting, before retiring in 2018. He has held leadership positions with the United Nations Association in Canada, several condominium boards, the Edmonton Soaring Club, and the Baha'i Faith. Hobbies have included: golf, curling, photography and flying gliders and tow planes. His wife is Joan Blood.

**Rev. Audrey Brooks**, (M. ED.; M. Div.) is a retired chaplain with the Unitarian Church of Edmonton. For many years she facilitated the Interfaith Centre's annual concert as well as our UN International Day of Peace celebrations, the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination commemorations and the Genocide Memorial Services. She also serves on the Board of the Central Region Interfaith Housing Initiative which works to end homelessness in Edmonton. Audrey is involved with the Missing and Murdered Women and Girls marches; served on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as part of the University of Alberta Interfaith Chaplain's Association; is a founding member of the U of Alberta Pride Alumni Association; and is a Raging Granny. She is the mother of 5, grandmother of 13, great grandmother of 13, and great great grandmother of Lincoln, who was born in October of 2020.

## BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

**Lewis Cardinal** is a communicator and educator who has dedicated his life's work to creating and maintaining connections and relationships that cross-cultural divides. His work has mirrored his personal vision of a socially just and responsive society. His long track record of public service includes, founding Board Member of the Fort Edmonton Management Company, Board Member of Theatre Network, Board member of the North Saskatchewan River Valley Conservation Society, and Board Emeritus of the Council for a Parliament of World Religions, to mention a few. Lewis has received Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal for Public Service, the IndSpire Award for Public Service (the highest award given to an Indigenous person by Indigenous people in Canada), the Province of Alberta's Centennial Medal for his work in Human Rights and Diversity, the Distinguished Alumni Award from Grant MacEwan University, and was recently conferred the Honorary Degree of "Doctor of Sacred Letters" from St. Stephen's College at the University of Alberta. Lewis is Woodland Cree from the Sucker Creek Cree First Nation in northern Alberta, Canada. His consulting company, Cardinal Strategic Communications, specializes in Indigenous education, governance, and communications. Currently, Lewis is Project Manager for "kihciy askiy-Sacred Earth" in the City of Edmonton, Canada's first urban Indigenous Ceremony and Cultural designated land-base.

**Avau Fast** was born in Baluchistan, a beautiful region north west of India, during the British colonial period. She grew up in an area replete with different ethnicities. Later in India no matter where she lived there were churches, temples, synagogues and mosques around the railway colony where she lived. Before attending boarding school she lived with her aunt, and every morning as they walked to pick up fresh vegetables from the market, at each place of worship on the way, they would stop to pray. She recalls that she really did not mind as this gave her a few seconds to rest her weary feet. Avau looks upon India as an old multicultural country and Canada as a new one. As a born Zoroastrian she is proud to be a part of the Canadian mosaic; studying and working among different faiths and cultures has always been her interest in life.

**Karen Gall** has served on the Centre board since 2009; she is Vice President/Secretary of the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation (CMEF) where, for over a decade, she served as Chair of the annual CMEF Harmony Brunch commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. At her synagogue, Temple Beth Ora, Karen has served as a lay leader for Shabbat and festival services, a member of the Ritual Committee, a founding member of the Chavurat HaShir choir and as a cantorial soloist. She has worked with the LGBTQ community to support and help organize both the annual Interfaith Pride Service as well as the Pride Shabbat service at her synagogue. Karen focuses her time on successfully building bridges, using her appreciation and awareness of the value of multiculturalism and interfaith connections while welcoming opportunities to share her Jewish values and traditions with students of all ages and members of the broader community. Karen is also working with a diverse group of



## BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

people in St. Albert to establish St. Albert Interfaith Connections. She has received recognition for her dedication and work advocating for interfaith, multicultural and human rights issues including a St. Albert International Women's Day Award and a Daughter of the Year Award.

**Archit Gandhi** immigrated in 2014 from India and currently works in the supply chain field. He has been volunteering with the Jain community and Hindu temple for the last few years and recently served for two years as secretary of the Jain Community committee. He is grateful for the opportunity to join the Edmonton interfaith community and look forward to connecting and spreading positive messages.

**Len Gierach** is a cleric with Eckankar and has been engaged in interfaith work both in Edmonton and with the North American Interfaith Network. He is a lifetime member of NAIN and the Interfaith Centre. He chaired the proposal committee for Parliament of World Religions 2010-2015 and NAIN Connect 2018 proposal committee. He has been active as a member of the team responsible for the recent "Building Bridges" documentary. He is a published author, poet and recently contributed a chapter to the anthology "Interfaith: A Rainbow for the World". Len loves choral singing, piano, gardening, hiking and public speaking. He owns a health and wellness business in partnership with his wife Heather and learns daily from their five adult children and three grandchildren.

**Rev. Dr. Rob Hankinson** has been associated with the EIC since witnessing the signatures of the Centre's founding board members to the Alberta Societies Act application, December 1995. Since then he has held a number of positions on the Centre's board and is now happy to be an honorary member. In December 2012 Rob retired from 40 years ministry with the United Church of Canada. On the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) he serves as a member of the newly formed NAIN Council. In August 2019 Rob relocated to Nova Scotia and is a member of the executive of the Wolfville Area Interchurch Council which is working towards hosting NAIN in 2024 or 2025.

**Farah Jamil** is an Ivy League-educated Health Executive and a certified Leadership / Executive Coach, where she has combined her love of science and business to work in several sectors including: government, health region, non-profit and academia in Canada and the United States. Her work has ranged from briefing Canadian Ministers, US Senators and Ambassadors on strategic health policy issues to guest lecturing and coaching clients globally on how to be less passive and more proactive in their career / leadership goals. As a woman of colour and a visible religious minority, Farah recognized the need to bring down barriers and build bridges within the realm of interfaith dialogue. She has volunteered for several interfaith boards, committees and organizations, including the American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP), A Common Word

## | BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

Alberta – Christian Muslim Interfaith Dialogue, and more. As a proud member of the EICEA, Farah is committed to “help create a society which respects the richness of human diversity”.

**Shiraz Kanji** recently retired having worked in three different careers – professional engineer, Information Technology and recently as financial planning consultant. He has worked in three different countries and speaks five languages. Shiraz is passionate about public speaking and has spoken to a wide variety and sizes of audiences on different subjects including religion and Islam. He has been an active Toastmaster for over 30 years and has conducted many training seminars locally and overseas. He enjoys learning about different faith communities and participating in interfaith dialogue. Shiraz is an active volunteer, having served his Toastmasters District, his professional organizations, church and community organizations. He has also volunteered for the Provincial Government sponsored Board Development Program. His other interests include music, cinema and reading.

**Nasim Kherani** is a long-time volunteer having served extensively both within and outside the Muslim Ummah over the past 40 years. While serving as treasurer of the Edmonton Chapter of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW), Nasim helped restore and find a new home for Edmonton’s first mosque at Fort Edmonton Park, Al Rashid Mosque. Following her service as president of the Edmonton chapter of CCMW and treasurer of the Western Canada Group of Soroptomist International, she returned to serve the Ummah by becoming director of the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities chairing the Interfaith Portfolio. As the resource development coordinator for the Aga Khan University, she has coordinated more than five major fundraising drives aiding in the creation of an international-standard medical school, nursing school and sports centre in Karachi, Pakistan, and Nairobi, Kenya. Most recently, Nasim served as president of CCMW, Edmonton Chapter and also has been elected to be part of the CCMW National Board. In her professional life, Nasim completed accounting designations (FCCA, CGA, CPA) in both England and Canada. After working in a public practice in London, England, and then for more than a decade as Senior Financial and Management Auditor with the Alberta Social Services, Nasim switched focus to the health sector, managing and performing the accounting for a large dental office for over three decades. Using this experience, Nasim has spent the last seven years consulting for the Aga Khan University Nairobi on dental practice management and expansion as part of a larger public–private partnership. Nasim has completed further training to become a certified financial planner (CFP) and now operates a group of companies focused on investment and real estate development.

**Kimberly Lang** is a teacher and actress in Edmonton and the surrounding area. A mother of four, she accepted life’s challenges and studied to become a teacher at the age of 30, accomplishing that

## | BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

goal in 1991. In 1995, she became a widow upon the death of her husband, Roland, and worked hard to support her children through to their adulthood accepting challenge and tragedy. She continued to teach at First Nation Reserves and in the communities to support youth and families in need, as she looked after her family, as well as continuing to volunteer in the community and theatre companies in the region. Kim has been engaged as a volunteer ever since she was a young woman, contributing to community events and gatherings with energy and zeal. She first started as an instructor with children with Downs Syndrome at the age of 11 years old and never stopped through school and family life. Kim could be depended upon to create learning opportunities, give encouragement and have full community engagement wherever she lived. She has continued to work with youth and children in the theatre world as a mentor, and coach with companies like Festival Players, Horizon Players, Ad Hoc Theatre Group and ELOPE. Within the Unitarian Church of Edmonton, she sings with the Choralis Choir and volunteers at many church events and fundraisers. She has worked closely with Audrey Brooks to bring the Annual Genocide Memorial to the community for over 10 years, working on programming, planning and hospitality. With the Interfaith Centre, she has acted as stage manager, coordinating performers, activities backstage, and hospitality as requested by the board and Audrey. Kim enjoys being with people and helping them to accomplish their dreams and life goals. She supports the community in unsung ways and can be depended on to do her best at any task that is asked of her. Her faith is not one belief centered, and she recognizes the diversity of people and faiths that inhabit this world that we live on. This faith journey can be attributed to Audrey Brooks at the beginning as Audrey began her own search but has continued as Kim has embraced her own beliefs and ideas as she moves through time and experience. As life continues, through COVID challenges with new goals, and new people to meet, there will always be new adventures and more challenges to grasp hold of and learn from. Kim looks forward to new things to learn, experience, and enjoy.

**Rev. Dr. Don Mayne** was born in Edmonton but took his schooling, university, and theological training in Saskatchewan and his master's degree at Boston University School of Theology. His doctorate is an honorary degree from St. Stephen's College. He was the founding president of the EIC, serving for five years, then continued on the board until he was appointed an honorary member in 2011. He served on the board of the North American Interfaith Network and was president from 2000 to 2004. He also was a founding member of the No Room in the Inn Committee of the Edmonton and District Council of Churches (EDCC). They have encouraged the congregations of the EDCC to donate to a different community agency each year to assist with poverty and housing issues, and in 20 years they have raised over \$1 million for various service agencies.

## BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

**Pauline Paulson (OBM)** was a Metis Elder who was born and lived her young years in Northern Manitoba, adolescence on a farm in the central part of the province and the balance in Winnipeg. In Edmonton she divided her time between Native Counseling Services as a spiritual and cultural advisor, the Elders Counsel for Concordia University and Elder in residence for the HIV Drop in Centre. Her formal studies included but were not limited to a diploma in Applied Counselling from the University of Manitoba, another in Child Family and Community Services through Red River Community College (Winnipeg) sponsored by Metis Child and Family Services, and the facilitator training program “In Search of Your Warrior” through Native Counselling Services of Alberta. Her informal education included over 30 years of participating in aboriginal ceremonies and learning from various Elders, locally, nationally and internationally. She said “I believe Spirit led me so I can fulfill the reason I was born into this world at this time”.

**Kathie Reith** says that at a young age she was taught the value of being actively involved in the betterment of her community. She has served on many committees and boards, including the Regional Heritage Fair which encourages students from Grades 4 to 9 to get excited about history and the Soroptimist International Group which empowers women to make an impact on others’ lives by financing their dreams. Other projects are an awareness campaign on the effect of human trafficking and “Welcome Home” which befriends newly housed participants who were previously homeless.

**Manish Shah** was born and brought up in India; he has a Bachelor of Science & Medical Laboratory Technology degree as part of his academic carrier and studied Fundamentals & Science of Jainism as part of his spiritual journey. This work explains the basic and complex principals of Jainism with the scientific point of view and translates it in a way that can be easily understood. He also studied Vedic Hindu philosophy and Buddhism and the major technical differences between these three major religions practiced in South East Asia, mainly in India, Burma, Myanmar, Cambodia, Sri Lanka. Jain philosophy connects with nature and the environment and its effects on all life including human, animal, plants and nonliving matter. Volunteer activities include fund raising for earthquake relief, blood donation camps and organizing annual republic day functions in India; he captained the intercollege cricket team of Gujarat University for many years. He teaches mental health improvement and food habits and does public and motivational speaking, promotes and practices naturopathy, nonviolence and Jain lifestyle and vegetarian food ideology for healthy human society and keeping the environment safe for generations to come. He is passionate about motorcycle riding and exploring the natural beauty of Alberta in all directions as well as in learning about religious diversity and different cultures. He is working towards achieving a Vedic concept of “Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam”: that we are part of a universal undivided family.

## | BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

**Virginia Sharek** is an Albertan who attended the U of A, completing a Bachelor of Education in 1967 and a Bachelor of Arts in 1990. After her first degree she spent a year in London, England Upon her return to Canada she taught in Calgary for a year then two more years in Edmonton. She was married in 1973 and chose to stay home to raise her two sons. In 1993 Virginia took the opportunity to serve as the ecumenical and interfaith officer for the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton until her retirement in June 2013. During those years she held a number of positions in the Edmonton & District Council of Churches as well as in the Western Diocesan Eparchial Coordinators of Ecumenism. She was the representative for the Ukrainian Catholic Church of Canada on the Canadian Council of Churches for six years. Being a member of the “No Room in the Inn” committee since 2001 has provided the opportunity to get to know so many dedicated individuals in many organizations that are engaged in providing safe and affordable housing for people experiencing difficulties and hard times. In 2014, Virginia became a Life Member of the Interfaith Centre and joined the executive in 2019 as secretary. With appreciation and enthusiasm she continues to be part of the activities, educational opportunities, experiences, projects and workshops provided by the staff and members of the Centre.

### **Karnail Singh**

**Rebecca Wright** has been involved in interfaith work since 2012 and has been to multiple NAIN “Connects” including helping to plan the one held in Edmonton in 2018 and designing its logo.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2021 – 2022

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## EXECUTIVE

Guy Blood – *President*  
Farah Jamil – *Vice-President*  
Nasim Kherani – *Treasurer*  
Virginia Sharek – *Secretary*  
Pauline Paulson (OBM) – *Past-President*

## GENERAL BOARD MEMBERS

Eileen Bell  
Jagjeet Bhardwaj  
Rev. Audrey Brooks  
Lewis Cardinal  
Avau Fast  
Karen Gall  
Archit Gandhi  
Len Gierach  
Shiraz Kanji  
Kimberly Lang  
Kathie Reith  
Manish Shah  
Karnail Singh  
Rebecca Wright

## HONOURARY MEMBERS

Rev. Dr. Rob Hankinson  
Sushil Kalia (OBM)  
Rev. Dr. Don Mayne  
J. V. Mehta

Netta Phillet – *Office Coordinator*



# EDMONTON INTERFAITH CENTRE FOR EDUCATION & ACTION

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#113, 11148 - 84 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 0V8  
Phone 780 - 413 - 6159 - Email - [intfaith@shaw.ca](mailto:intfaith@shaw.ca)  
Website - [edminterfaithcentre.ca](http://edminterfaithcentre.ca)

**ANNUAL REPORT**

2021/2022