

Edmonton
Interfaith Centre
for Education & Action

ANNUAL REPORT

kihcihkaw askî
(this land is sacred)



2024/2025



IN MEMORIAM

Last July we lost one of earliest members, **John Kloster**. He was an educator with Edmonton Catholic Schools and very active in community, church, and volunteer work, with a heart for social justice and ecumenism as well as a strong interest in politics. We have several of his books in our library and he had been a L & L speaker.

We were saddened to see that **Muriel Stanley Venne** died in December, it was a great loss for many communities. In 2006 she graciously accepted our second Interfaith Advocate Award. In her own words: *“The thing I was trying to change was to have people see my family and my people with love and caring. I really wanted people to be equal—with no hierarchy—just the right to be who you are and for women to be respected.”*

In February we said “Goodbye” to our long time Life Member and former secretary of the board. **Betty Johnson**, dedicated maidservant of Bahá’u’lláh, beloved community member, cherished matriarch of her family and treasured friend to so many who held her dear, has taken flight to the eternal realm. “A noble soul hath ascended unto the Kingdom of reality, and hastened from the mortal world of dust to the realm of everlasting glory.”

OUR VISION

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

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.





ABOUT US

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; 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 28 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 and 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, they have become much more common. We will continue to promote religious literacy and look forward to a time when the embrace of difference and recognition of it as a strength will be taken for granted.

Our programs are designed 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 and in our membership. 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 us all. 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, 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 five Parliaments of the World’s Religions (PWR). It is incredibly inspiring to be part of 10,000 people gathered together to make the world better, more compassionate, with more understanding of each other. Several of our members have attended all the “modern day” Parliaments, but not the first one in 1893!

We are 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.

CONTENTS

03	In Memoriam, Our Vision and Mission
04	About Us
06	Agenda for the June 10th, 2025 AGM
07	Minutes of the June 5th, 2024 AGM
09	President's Report
10	Executive Director's Report
11	Treasurer's Report
12	Financial Statements
16	Building Bridges Among Faith Traditions Concert
16	Celebrating Our Faiths
17	Edmonton Interfaith Housing Society
17	Faith Spaces Safe Spaces
18	Lunch & Learn
18	Membership
19	United Nations International Day of Peace
19	World Interfaith Harmony Week
20	Board Member Biographies
26	Board of Directors 2024 – 2025

2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

JUNE 10, 2025 - HELD AT BAITUL HADI AHMADIYYA MUSLIM JAMAAT 7005 - 98 AVE., EDMONTON

Welcome from Hosts & Presentation of Awards Dinner & Mosque Tour

Land Acknowledgment – Guy Blood

- ▶ Approval of Agenda
- ▶ Approval of Minutes of last AGM - June 5th, 2024
- ▶ President's Report
- ▶ Executive Director's Report
- ▶ Treasurer's Report and Year End Financial Statements
- ▶ Committee Reports
 - Building Bridges Among Faith Traditions Concert
 - Celebrating Our Faiths
 - Edmonton Interfaith Housing Society
 - Faith Spaces | Safe Spaces
 - Lunch & Learn
 - Membership
 - United Nations International Day of Peace - Sept. 21
 - World Interfaith Harmony Week

Nominations and Election of Members to the Board for a two-year term:

The following members were elected or re-elected last year (June 2024) and are willing to serve another year: **Gail Allan, Guy Blood, Helen Chan Bennett, Avau Fast, Nasim Kherani, Virginia Sharek & Suzanne Sauve.**

The following members are completing the second year of a term and are willing to serve another two years: **Audrey Brooks, Michael Frishkopf, Kathie Reith, Manish Shah, Gary Simpson & Rebecca Wright.**

Shiraz (and Khairun) **Kanji** are moving to Toronto and we thank him for many years of dedicated service. We are grateful he will continue to be connected to us as an Honorary Board Member, joining **Jagjeet Bhardwaj, Karen Gall, Rev. Dr. Rob Hankinson and Rev. Dr. Don Mayne.**

Also leaving the board at the end of their terms are **Surinder Hoonjan, Farah Jamil and Karnail Singh.** We thank them, and **Jermiah Ellis** as well.

We are very pleased to introduce 5 new board members:

Paul Bergen * David Crewe * Kehinde Olabimtan * Jorge Robleto * Boyko Zlatev

Any New Business

2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

JUNE 5, 2024 - HELD AT KIHCHIKAW ASKI (THIS PLACE IS SACRED) 14141 FOX DRIVE, EDMONTON

5:30 Welcome & Tour of Site with Lewis Cardinal, Project Manager

Present: Gail Allan, Guy Blood, Audrey Brooks, Lewis Cardinal, Larry Derkach, Jeremiah Ellis, Michael Frishkopf, Karen Gall, Len Gierach, Ruth Hill, Shiraz & Khairun Kanji, Kehinde Olabimtan, Netta Phillet, Suzanne Sauve, Shaykh Sheikh, Gary Simpson, Margery, Paul & Rebecca Wright.

Regrets: Jagjeet Bhardwaj, Avau Fast, Farah Jamil, Nasim Kherani, Kathie Reith, Virginia Sharek.

7:30 Meeting called to order by Gail who expressed gratitude for the tour, it gave her a new sense of the sacredness of the land. Lewis thanked the Interfaith Centre for the work it does; the land is his medicine. **Applause.**

Land Acknowledgment – Guy Blood

Gail asked those present to briefly introduce themselves.

Approval of Agenda moved by Larry, seconded by Karen, passed.

Approval of Minutes of last AGM - June 14, 2023 moved by Larry, seconded by Suzanne, carried.

President's Report included in Annual Report (AR).

Executive Director's Report included in AR.

Treasurer's Report & Year End Financial Statements included in AR.

In Nasim's absence Netta noted the society has been running a deficit for several years. She mentioned the thorough review will result in some changes in procedures and reporting, 2-year comparisons for example. Fund raising ideas are welcome, Rebecca suggested a cook-book and is willing to explore the idea. Shaykh recently presented at an anti-racism conference for young people, suggested a series called What Does Life Mean to You?

Approval of Treasurer's Report & Financial Statements as presented moved by Audrey, seconded by Lewis, carried.

▶ Committee Report (all included in the AR): questions & comments were welcomed:

- Building Bridges Concert
- Celebrating Our Faiths
- Edmonton Interfaith Housing Society
- Faith Spaces/Safe Spaces (Gail referred to virtual conference in 4 days)
- Gender Based Violence
- Ignite Change
- Lunch & Learn
- Membership (numbers are decreasing, about 5 per year, invite friends).
- UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination - March 21
- United Nations International Day of Peace - Sept. 21
- World Interfaith Harmony Week

2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES (CONTINUED)

JUNE 5, 2024 - HELD AT KIHCIHKAW ASKI (THIS PLACE IS SACRED) 14141 FOX DRIVE, EDMONTON

Gail said the report reflects a very busy year with a lot of involvement and commitment. Len moved, Jeremiah seconded approval of all committee reports, carried.

Nominations and Election of Members to the Board for a two-year term.

The following members were elected or re-elected last year (June 2023) and are willing to serve another year: **Audrey Brooks, Jeremiah Ellis, Michael Frishkopf, Surinder Singh Hoonjan, Kathie Reith, Manish Shah, Gary Simpson, Karnail Singh & Rebecca Wright.**

The following members are completing the second year of a term and are willing to serve another two years: **Gail Allan, Guy Blood, Avau Fast, Shiraz Kanji, Nasim Kherani, Virginia Sharek and Suzanne Sauve.**

Guy moved and Netta seconded the re-election of those beginning a new two- year term and the election of the new executive as named below, carried.

Stepping away from the board after many years of exemplary service are Jagjeet Bhardwaj and Karen Gall. Karen is moving to Ottawa to be closer to her daughters and twin grand - daughters. **Thank you Jagjeet and Karen for your valuable contributions over many years. We are grateful you will continue to be connected to us as Honorary Board Members, joining Rev. Dr. Rob Hankinson and Rev. Dr. Don Mayne.**

Additional: Shiraz informed the board at the AGM that he and Khairun are moving east as well, to be close to children and grandchildren; he has also consented to become an Honorary Board Member.

We've missed our Past – President Farah Jamil since she moved and are pleased that she will continue to be connected as our liaison with the Calgary Interfaith Council.

Election of Officers:

President – Gail Allan

Vice – President – Jeremiah Ellis

Secretary – Gary Simpson

Treasurer – Nasim Kherani

Past - President – Farah Jamil

Any New Business

A strategic planning session will be held in the fall, the option to join virtually will be offered and it is hoped the honorary directors will attend as well.

An open house will be held in the fall in our new office.

Motion to adjourn by Rebecca Wright at 9:30, carried. Minutes submitted by Netta Phillet.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT DR. GAIL ALLAN

We come to this annual meeting at a time when the role of faith communities as prophetic witnesses for justice, compassion, reconciliation and peace could not be more starkly clear. Our most deeply held values are being threatened, and so are the most vulnerable among us. The danger comes not only from global forces impacting the lives of people across the planet, but can also be seen in multiple dimensions in our own community. Our role as an interfaith community - building relationships, engaging in dialogue, offering education, participation in advocacy and social action is vital. As we reflect on our work, let us also seek ways to strengthen our ability to respond to the urgency of these days.

In the context of the transitions of the previous year, and our approaching 30th anniversary, we took time this year to engage in a strategic planning process. Our last strategic plan was created in 2019. Since then we've been through a pandemic, multiple global and local crises, and our own crisis moment of office sale, flood and move to our new space. And so it seemed important to look again at our vision and mission, and consider the directions and activities that will enable us to carry out that mission as we move into the future. We were pleased to have several members and community partners participate along with the board. We the support of our facilitator Ann Goldblatt, the creative ideas of the planning day and subsequent board meetings have been integrated into a plan that will be presented to the new board to begin implementing this fall.

Two important aspects of the strategic plan that we have begun working on are membership and communication. In order to expand membership and engage more people with our work, a membership committee will work on revising our membership structure and reaching out to faith communities and organizations to invite them to join us. We have also started a renewal of our website, and will also be reviewing other ways to communicate more effectively.

As I review the activities of this past year, I note the importance of networking and relationship-building with different organizations that share in the work for a more inclusive, compassionate and just community. For me this has included participation in Faith Spaces|Safe Spaces work on anti-racism in our faith communities; links to the Calgary Interfaith Council and the Edmonton and District Council of Churches; bringing an interfaith lens to the Jubilee 2025 "Turn Debt into Hope" campaign coordinated by KAIROS Canada; and attending events sponsored by the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights and Sisters Dialogue at Amanah, a space for "connection, healing, and growth" serving Muslim women in Edmonton.

The strategic planning process highlighted the contributions of our ongoing programming to community building and collaboration among people of faith in Edmonton. I am grateful for the commitment and hard work of our Executive Director, Netta Phillet, our board, and other members to create opportunities to share in learning, spirituality and advocacy. Whether people come together to "lunch and learn" or to join voices and hearts in interfaith harmony, we participate in building respect for human dignity and diversity, and making possible the flourishing of all creation.

I have been honoured to serve as president of the board these past 2 years. I look forward to continuing to contribute to this organization which plays such a vital role in the Edmonton community.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NETTA PHILLET

We've been in our new office for a year and are almost settled! Robertson Wesley United Church (RWUC) is a busy place: providing food security a few days a week, several choirs and music ensembles rehearsing and performing, art classes, meetings of various groups...

My last year's report was written mainly from the basement of our 1913 house where I'd been working for several months. We took possession of our new office on May 1st, 2024 and the beginning wasn't smooth. Our old furniture had been moved for free by the previous landlord into a storage place (also gratis) but several pieces were damaged beyond repair. We found a good deal on 4 second hand units from a company that didn't deliver so more movers needed, plus a handy man. All this cost over \$2200, we are lucky to have casino proceeds for these unanticipated expenses.

I brought the computer over thinking connecting to the internet would be easy, not! I'd told Rogers/Shaw this building is 110 years old, they said no problem, turned out to need 2 visits, running actual cable through the old walls even though everything is called "wireless"! Setting up auto payment from one bank account for the phone was an ordeal. The R/S merger wasn't complete, needed another new, separate account, they wanted some information faxed! Then after much frustration and another tech visit we discovered the new VOIP phone wasn't "ported" correctly the first time and it needed its own modem which they hadn't brought. Finally this was all solved and last summer was a time of settling into roughly the same amount of space but only one room rather than the two we had.

Sales of the 2025 Multifaith Calendar were down, largely because of the postal strike. This is a good fund raiser for us which takes a fair bit of my time for a few months each year. When the possibility of a strike became serious in the first week of November I stopped mailing prepaid orders and notified all those buyers, was able to make other arrangements with some. The message sent to previous buyers had to be changed as well.

I'm on two committees of the Edmonton Interfaith Housing Society, please look for a separate report.

Various zoom meetings were attended to see how we can be involved with:

- The Canadian Interfaith Conversation work on a faith component at the G7 Leaders' Summit now just a few weeks away;
- North American Interfaith Network annual conference in Wolfville, planned for August 2025, sadly had to be postponed;
- Kairos planning events for the Jubilee year.

It is also my honour to represent us at events such as:

- Edmonton Heritage Council AGM (at which we are acknowledged as a member);
- Celebration at the Aga Khan Garden;
- Opening of a new Ismaili Jamatkhana;
- Annual Edmonton Community Foundation lunch (we have two funds with them).

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED) NETTA PHILLET

Last November I met with Rasheal Charles, MSW, Director of Mission, Spirituality & Volunteerism with Covenant Health. They buy 80 Multifaith Calendars every year, we talked about some ideas she has about working together on some education initiatives.

In April I met with Nuha Dhooma, a caseworker with the Evolve Program, part of the Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV) whose Community Consultation Update I attended in February. There is another one on June 20th to which we're all invited. It would be good to develop a relationship with her and OPV. Also met with Samantha Pearson, Operations Manager at YEG Family Counselling. One of the main focuses of her role is fostering community collaborations, she's another person I'm trying to find time to maintain a connection with which could be mutually beneficial.

Besides providing support for events like the concert and World Interfaith Harmony Week (reported on elsewhere), I complete the onerous applications to use casino proceeds to pay rent for venues, performers' honoraria, technical expertise, etc. This enables us to have free events that everyone can attend.

With Gail and Goldblatt I worked on our new Strategic Plan which Gail has included in her President's Report.

Our most recent event was on May 25th, an Open House after Sunday services for the RWUC congregation and our members. We were pleased with the attendance.

Much of my time is spent on regular office work: keeping the books for two bank accounts; recording all payments for membership, donations, sales, etc; staying in touch with you, our precious members!

As always I thank the board for their support.

TREASURER'S REPORT NASIM KHERANI

We are grateful for the support received from the Northern Spirit Regional Council of the United Church, our largest faith-based donor, and the Edmonton Community Investment Operating Grant, our largest grantor. We would also like to thank Beth Shalom Synagogue, the Edmonton Community Foundation (with whom we have two funds), the Jain Society of Alberta and the Ramgarhia Gursikh Society, plus many individual donors. Thanks as well to board member **Suzanne Sauve** and **Larry Derkach** for their internal review of the year end statements, as per our bylaws.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

AUDIT STATEMENT

Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025

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

The Board of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre has chosen Larry Derkach and Suzanne Sauve to review the 2024 - 2025 Financial Statements.

Accordingly they have reviewed the TD Canada Trust records, cheques, deposits and bank statements for both the “Operating Account” and the “Casino Account”.

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 31st, 2025.

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

Signed:

Larry Derkach

Suzanne Sauve

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'L. Derkach', written over a horizontal line.A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'S. Sauve', written over a horizontal line.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

EDMONTON INTERFAITH CENTRE Income & Expenses

April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025 - Operating Account

Income

Donations from Individuals	3,796.40
City of Edmonton Grant	2,212.00
Northern Spirit Regional Council United Church	1,875.00
Edmonton Community Foundation	1,258.00
Ramgarhia Gursikh Society	1,050.00
Beth Shalom Synagogue	250.00
Jain Society of Alberta	250.00
Sales Revenue (mostly calendars)	3,929.25
Membership Dues	1,365.00
Concert Silent Auction	1,350.00
Concert Tickets	335.00
Repay Loan Made to Casino Account	300.00
Alberta Govt. Grant for Faith Spaces/Safe Spaces	9,950.00
Green Family Charitable Trust	<u>20,000.00</u>
Total Income	47,920.65

Expense

Salary	28,632.98
Office	351.36
Paypal Charges	50.72
Bank Charges	40.00
Loan to Casino Account	300.00
Anglican Diocese - Faith Spaces/Safe Spaces	9,950.00
Red Earth Blue Sky Productions	<u>20,000.00</u>
Total Expense	<u>59,325.06</u>
Net Ordinary Income (deficit)	<u>-11,404.41</u>

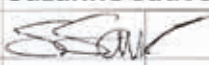
Reviewed on May 14th, 2025

Larry Derkach

Suzanne Sauvé



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

EDMONTON INTERFAITH CENTRE - CASINO ACCOUNT			
Income & Expense - April 1, 24 to March 31, 2025		DEBITS	CREDITS
Balance Forward			4,721.16
From operating account			300.00 *
Repay operating account		300.00	*
CASINO (taxi)		70.00	
FROM AGLC			77,875.48
RENT		12,000.00	
DONATION TO ANGL. DIOC. (FAITH SPACES/SAFE SPACES)		5000.00	
DONATION TO U of A (BLACK HISTORY MONTH)		2000.00	
DONATION TO DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS (SUDAN)		1186.00	
DONATION TO INDIG. KNOWLEDGE & WISDOM CENTRE		1000.00	
OWL		2833.95	
WORLD INT. HARMONY WEEK (musicians, venues, tech)		2814.00	
MOVERS, FURNITURE, MAILBOX & FORWARDING		2225.61	
INSURANCE - (2 policies)		2133.00	
STRATEGIC PLANNER		1575.00	
OFFICE SUPPLIES, PRINT ANNUAL REPORT		1567.66	
WEBSITE		1497.50	
ROGERS/SHAW CABLE		1406.63	
FORMAT ANNUAL REPORT		525.00	
2 SPEAKERS - LUNCH & LEARN		400.00	
TELUS (BEFORE MOVE)		348.24	
ZOOM ACCOUNT FOR ONE YEAR		225.65	
IDERD 2024 - Speaker		200.00	
MEMBERSHIP IN ECOHH		150.00	
COMPUTER MAINTENANCE		150.00	
RENT PA, DAUGHTERS DAY, TICKET FOR PROMO EVENTS		169.70	
BANK CHARGES		113.50	
TOTALS		\$39,891.44	\$82,896.64
BALANCE FORWARD & CREDITS	\$82,896.64		
EXPENSES	\$39,891.44		
BANK BALANCE March 31, 2025	\$43,005.20		
Reviewed on May 14th, 2025			
Larry Derkach		Suzanne Sauvé	
			

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

Edmonton Interfaith Centre Balance Sheet

31 Mar 25

ASSETS

Chequing	
TD Bank	18,833.06
TD Bank Casino Account	43,005.20
Total Chequing	61,838.26
GST Recoverable	223.34
TOTAL ASSETS	62,061.60

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Restricted Funds	43,005.20
Unrestricted Net Assets	30,460.81
Net Income	-11,404.41
Total Equity	62,061.60
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	62,061.60

Reviewed on May 14th, 2025

Larry Derkach

Suzanne Sauvé



BUILDING BRIDGES AMONG FAITH TRADITIONS CONCERT

On February 9th we held another wonderful Building Bridges Among Faith Traditions concert in the warm and welcoming Unitarian Church with Rev. Audery Books acting as MC. Under the direction of Dr. Michael Frishkopf (U of A Dept. of Music), the twelve member Edmonton Transcultural Orchestra presented a true world music experience, spanning the globe and several centuries. Our Interfaith Advocate Award was presented to Lewis Cardinal, whose acceptance speech highlighted the importance of the work we do. The concert only serves as a fund-raiser in a secondary sense but it is the one time a year we solicit donations; supporters were thanked in the program. Our usual silent auction added to the fun and we made over \$1300.

CELEBRATING OUR FAITHS



Since 2006 we have partnered with the city in this program, a permanent display in City Hall which changes every month to feature a different religious tradition. Participation hasn't recovered since closures due to COVID and an active shooter last year. Security has been massively heightened, access polices changed, downtown simply isn't as busy, there is no longer a city chaplain who is our champion, all resulting in the loss of a sense of real partnership. In the last year the faiths and observances showcased have been Islamic History Month, Passover, Eckankar, Jainism, Unitarian Universalism, Zoroastrianism, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Nicholas Roerich Peace Banner and Quakers.

EDMONTON INTERFAITH HOUSING SOCIETY

After last year's plenary, committees were formed to continue our work. It is important that we all understand that the critical lack of affordable housing didn't just happen, and the Education & Advocacy Committee has prepared a petition about what has been identified as the "Financialization of Housing". Planning is underway to present this to all levels of government, with appropriate talking points and specific "asks". Individual city councillors, MLA's and MP's will be approached. An educational event is being planned for the fall centred on housing for those with disabilities or other factors that may make it more difficult to find and retain adequate housing. Recent changes by the provincial government and the defunding of Homeward Trust make this even more necessary. Partnerships are being strengthened with the Edmonton Coalition on Housing & Homelessness, the Greater Edmonton Foundation and other potential community partners. The Social Media committee is putting together a communications strategy. We must resurrect the initial strong commitment we had from twenty-three faith leaders in 2011 and updated and reaffirmed seven years later. We plan to meet with religious and spiritual communities, not only to ask for renewed commitment but, equally important, to listen to their questions and concerns as well.

FAITH SPACES | SAFE SPACES GAIL ALLAN

Faith Spaces | Safe Spaces envisions a city where all faith spaces are safe spaces for Black people of faith and all Indigenous and people of colour who enter. Program activities of the initiative have included hosting anti-racism workshops and holding interfaith dialogues to educate and empower members to take action to address racism at the individual and community levels.

During the past year, the project integrated an Anti-Racism Toolkit into programming, providing a practical framework for addressing racism within faith communities.

In June of 2024 a workshop introducing the toolkit focused on an in-depth examination of the following terms, anti-racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, and anti-Asian racism. The purpose was to educate community members on what these terms really mean and their implications. Participants also had opportunity to share about their experiences of racism and how it had impacted them.

Efforts continued throughout the year to build a collaborative, interfaith network to expand capacity for anti-racism work in our faith communities. The focus was largely on communication and building relationships with interested groups. However, transitions among the steering committee have led to a decision to limit activity until capacity for the work can be renewed.

LUNCH & LEARN

One of our most popular programs, a monthly “Lunch & Learn”, which pivoted to Zoom for almost 2 years, has continued in a “hybrid” format. We still haven’t found exactly the right day and/or time in the new location so have only had two in the last year. Many speakers and topics have been offered and we have big plans for the near future.

Speakers and topics in the last year were:

- in Sept. 18 award-winning multi-genre writer, performer, poet and educator **Anna Marie Sewell** talked in about her involvement with the UN Peace Boat.
- in February, as part of World Interfaith Harmony Week, Rabbi David Kunin showed his video, “We are Indonesian Jews”.

MEMBERSHIP

We are pleased to have members from at least a dozen different religious traditions and they fall into 3 categories: Member, Life Member, and Organizational Member. Currently, we have 134 members of whom 49 are “Lifers”, generous supporters who have paid \$250 for which we are able to offer a tax receipt. We are in the process of revising the membership structure.

We only exist because of you and thanks to you!

Open House in May



UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE (SEPT. 21)

Our annual celebration of this important day was held once again last year at noon outside Government House. Board president Gail brought greetings and spoke about the importance of the day on its 75th anniversary. Former Senator Doug Roche was the keynote speaker; when we invited him he asked if people weren't tired of hearing him, we said who better? His message is needed now more than ever and focussed on the 25th anniversary of the U.N.'s adoption of the Culture of Peace. Paula Kirman and the Raging Grannies sang, it was a beautiful afternoon.

WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Poet Naomi McIlwraith presented President
Gail Allan with a compilation of
land acknowledgements



In 2012 the United Nations declared the first week of February as World Interfaith Harmony Week. Our events this year were:

Sunday, February 2nd – Our board member Dr. Michael Frishkopf and some U of A colleagues created a “Solidarity for Sudan” symposium in the Telus Centre. It was very informative with a range of presentations and included a fund raiser for Doctors Without Borders (MSF), one of the few agencies working to alleviate the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. We were proud to be named as a sponsor.

Monday February 3rd – Poetry at the Upper Crust Café – thanks Audrey for booking the room and arranging for a PA. We had 30 people sharing their amazing poems, in spite of – 30 degree weather and they donated almost enough to pay the room rental.

Wednesday, February 5th – Lunch & Learn – Rabbi David Kunin showed his video “We are Indonesian Jews”.

Sunday, February 9th – “Building Bridges Among Faith Traditions Concert”, see full report.

BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

Gail Allan is a member of the United Church of Canada who has worked for many years on issues of global and social justice; she lived in Edmonton until 1996, and has recently returned for “semi-retirement.” From 2004-2020 she was Coordinator for Ecumenical, Interchurch and Interfaith Relations in The United Church of Canada, representing the church in national and international ecumenical and interfaith groups, and supporting people engaged in dialogue and action in their local communities. She is an active participant in the North American Interfaith Network and Canadian Interfaith Conversation. From 2014-2020 she was co-chair of the National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee. She has a doctorate in Ethics from Emmanuel College of the Toronto School of Theology, with a focus on feminist theological and social ethics. At present she is an associate faculty member at St. Stephen’s College and a member of the Garneau and McDougall United Church congregation.

The Reverend Helen Chan Bennett is a Anglican Priest, a CPE teaching Chaplain, and Psychospiritual Integrative Counselor. Helen is employed as a Spiritual Health Specialist at the University of Alberta Hospital, Alberta Health Services. She is also a Chaplain with the Canadian Armed Forces medical unit. She integrates the trauma and resilience-informed care model, along with her spiritual direction training and Buddhist cultural tradition, into her personhood and practice.

Jagjeet Bhardwaj is a retired scientist who now devotes her life to full-time volunteer work. For almost 40 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 was also a member of the Provincial Court Nominating Committee of Alberta. She is a recipient of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Medal as well as the Centennial Medal, both 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 and is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal.

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 created and produced a half hour weekly television show entitled Unity in Religion. People from all faiths were interviewed using questions that focused on similarities rather than differences; it ran for three years. Realizing that the other major force in the world is politics he also became an active member of the United Nations Association in Canada, Edmonton Branch, serving as President and as Prairies Vice President to the National Office. In Ottawa he became acquainted with a few Ambassadors to the UN and was instrumental in having the UN Secretary General invited to the Parliament of the World’s Religions in 2015.

With the Edmonton Interfaith Centre he has served as Vice President, President and is an active Past President. From celebrating World Interfaith Harmony Week to creating a video promoting interfaith harmony, he supports the work of the Centre in many ways.

BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

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 Edmonton Interfaith Housing Society which works to end homelessness. 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 has received three awards for her social justice work in the larger community, and most recently the King Charles III Coronation Medal.

Jeremiah Ellis is an advocate for coming together in spite of our differences and the power of sport for social good. A lifelong athlete, he currently works part-time for Free Play for Kids while completing the final stages of a Master of Theological Studies at St. Stephen's College. During his Political Science degree at the University of Alberta, he co-created and lead a social media campaign called the World Mosaic Project that was supported by youth and leaders around Canada and the world—including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Jeremiah also served two terms with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group and was selected as a delegate for the 10th UNESCO Youth Forum in Paris, France. He currently serves on the advisory committee for CCUNESCO's Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. He also has a wide background in public speaking and has spoken at events such as WE Day, TEDx, the Canadian Human Rights Commission's Beyond Labels Symposium, and various panels and events within the UNESCO network and has also been engaged in community work with organizations and initiatives such as Apathy is Boring, GoPlay!, Amplify Youth Voices, KidSport, Canadian Hockey Enterprises, Inner City Rec, and Campus Community & Recreation. Jeremiah was also featured in two documentaries: The New Voice of Change: Jeremiah Ellis and Louder: Amplifying Youth Voices in Activism.

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.

Michael Frishkopf, PhD (frishkopf.org) is Professor of Music and Director of the Canadian Centre for Ethnomusicology at the University of Alberta. Centering on the Middle East and Africa, his research includes Music and Islam, Immigration, Development, Global Health, Architecture, Aesthetics, Sound and Wellbeing, Virtual Reality, AI and Machine Learning, and Social Network Analysis. Recent publications include "The Sonorous Audible Mosque", in *Mosque: Approaches to Art and Architecture* (2024); "Localized Timbres and Tonalities of Qur'ānic Recitation: From Africa to Indonesia", *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 8:1 (2023); and "Music for Global Human Development: Participatory Action Research for Health and Wellbeing", *MUSICultures* 49 (2022). He is co-editor of *Music, Sound, and Architecture in Islam* (2018) and two forthcoming books, *Resisting the Dehumanization of Refugees* (2024), and *Ṭarab: Music, Ecstasy, Emotion, and Performance* (2025). He is currently focused on an AI soundscape project

BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

for student mental health, supported by United Way. He is also a performer and composer and has led the U of A's Middle Eastern and North African Music Ensemble since 2004.

Karen Gall has served on the Edmonton Interfaith Centre board since 2009. For many years she was President of the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation (CMEF) where, for over a decade, she chaired the annual CMEF Harmony Brunch commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Karen was also a founding member of the St. Albert Interfaith Connections, an organization dedicated to providing an interfaith presence in that community. At her synagogue, Temple Beth Ora, Karen 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 worked with the LGBTQ community to support and help organize both the annual Edmonton 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. 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, a Daughter of the Year Award and the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal in recognition of her valuable contribution to the province.

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. He serves on the council of the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN). In August 2019 Rob relocated to Nova Scotia and is a member of the executive of the Wolfville Area Interchurch Council which is still working towards hosting the annual NAIN conference although it has been postponed for now.

Surinder Singh Hoonjan

Farah Jamil is an Ivy League-educated Health Executive, a certified Leadership / Executive Coach, an Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Life Coach, and the Founder of Muslim ADHDers and Interfaith ADHDers. 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 and ADHD 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 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 has retired from three different careers - professional engineer, Information Technology and most recently as financial planning consultant. He has worked in three countries and speaks five languages. Shiraz is passionate about public speaking and has spoken to a wide variety and sizes of

BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

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 Soroptimist 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 several 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. She is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal.

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 Interfaith Centre, 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. They have encouraged the congregations of the Council to donate to a different community agency each year and they have raised well over \$1 million.

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 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. She works for EPSB as an Educational Assistant.

Suzanne Sauv   was raised in Ottawa in a practicing French Canadian Catholic family. At university she found the Bah  '   Faith and learned about its prophet founder Bah  '  ll  h, gaining a greater love and

BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

appreciation of the status of all of God's Great Educators, these Manifestations of God, that include Jesus and his teachings she had grown up with. Suzanne has always been passionate about equality and was grateful to work for the Federal government with community groups, individuals and institutions helping remove barriers to equality and unity in diversity in our society. The federal department eventually became Canadian Heritage and the Women's Program, and at a certain point, Suzanne felt it was time for her to change careers. She returned to school for graduate studies and became a speech language pathologist. To this day, she continues to work in this fascinating field helping individuals overcome communication barriers, from aphasia to stuttering, find their voice, and even become proficient readers, despite dyslexia. Suzanne has been married to Jim Hoover for 39 years. Together, they enjoy walking around Edmonton's beautiful river valley, going to our great coffee shops, and visiting their two sons in Vancouver.

Manish Shah was born and raised in India and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Medical Laboratory Technology. His academic background is complemented by his spiritual studies, having delved deeply into the Fundamentals and Science of Jainism. His work elucidates the principles of Jainism from a scientific perspective, making complex concepts accessible and understandable. Additionally, Manish has explored Vedic Hindu philosophy and Buddhism, focusing on the technical differences between these three major religions prevalent in South East Asia, particularly in India, Burma, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka. Manish's engagement with Jain philosophy emphasizes its profound connection to nature and the environment, highlighting its impact on all forms of life, including humans, animals, plants, and even nonliving matter. His volunteer efforts include fundraising for earthquake relief, organizing blood donation camps, and coordinating annual Republic Day functions in India. He has also demonstrated leadership as the captain of Gujarat University's intercollege cricket team for several years. In his professional and personal life, Manish is committed to mental health improvement, advocating for healthy food habits, and delivering public and motivational speeches. He actively promotes naturopathy, nonviolence, and the Jain lifestyle, alongside vegetarian food ideology, to foster a healthier human society and ensure environmental sustainability for future generations. Manish is also an avid motorcyclist, passionate about exploring Alberta's natural beauty and learning about religious diversity and different cultures. Additionally, he is working as a residential realtor in Alberta, focusing on Edmonton and surrounding areas. His dedication to multiculturalism and universal kinship aligns with the Vedic concept of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," embodying the belief that all of humanity is one undivided family. Key Activities and Interests: Spiritual Studies: Fundamentals and Science of Jainism, Vedic Hindu philosophy, Buddhism. Volunteer Work: Earthquake relief fundraising, blood donation camps, Republic Day event organization. Leadership: Captain of Gujarat University's intercollege cricket team. Public Speaking: Mental health improvement, food habits, and motivational talks. Advocacy: Naturopathy, nonviolence, Jain lifestyle, vegetarian food ideology. Real Estate: Residential realtor in Alberta, specializing in Edmonton and surrounding areas. Personal Interests: Motorcycle riding, exploring natural beauty, learning about religious and cultural diversity. Objective: To contribute to a multicultural social organization by promoting spiritual and philosophical understanding, environmental sustainability, and healthy living practices, while fostering a sense of universal family and community. Manish is dedicated to achieving the ideal of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," striving to create a world where everyone is recognized as part of a universal undivided family.

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

BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

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. For Virginia, membership in the EICEA provides opportunities to work toward a kinder gentler and more just world with like minded people of faith which helps each of us to have hope.

Gary Simpson is a semi-retired teacher-counsellor. He has a seminary degree in Religious Education and recently completed an M.Div. at a multi-faith seminary. Gary, an ordained Universalist Christian clergy, attends McDougall United Church, where he is a Co-Chair of the Affirm Ministry. For a few years, Gary was on the executive of the Spirituality in Counselling Chapter of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. He has presented at conferences on topics related to spirituality and counseling, the counseling needs of sexual and gender minority youth, and how to respond to Biblical bullying. Gary has a passion for interpreting Scriptures in ways that do not wound, marginalize, and other people. He volunteers with a group that aims to reduce prejudice, discrimination, and hate.

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.

Netta Phillet – Executive Director was born in Edmonton and has a degree in Religious Studies from the U of A. She has been the coordinator of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre since 2006 after being on the executive for 6 years. She is a member of both Beth Shalom Synagogue and Temple Beth Ora (ask her the joke about one Jew, two synagogues.) Netta was a founding member of the Phoenix Multifaith Society for Harmony, is the treasurer of the Jewish Archives & Historical Society of Edmonton & Northern Alberta and of the local chapter of the M. Gandhi Foundation for World Peace. For over 30 years she has been a sister in the Arab/Jewish Women’s Peace Coalition. Much of the focus of her volunteer life is inter/intra faith dialogue and the place of women in religious ritual and observance.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2024 – 2025

EXECUTIVE

Dr. Gail Allan – President
Jeremiah Ellis – Vice - President
Nasim Kherani – Treasurer
Gary Simpson – Secretary
Farah Jamil – Past-President

GENERAL BOARD MEMBERS

Guy Blood
Rev. Audrey Brooks
Rev. Helen Chan Bennett
Avau Fast
Dr. Michael Frishkopf
Surinder Singh Hoonjan
Shiraz Kanji
Kathie Reith
Suzanne Sauve
Manish Shah
Virginia Sharek
Karnail Singh
Rebecca Wright

HONORARY BOARD

Jagjeet Bhardwaj
Karen Gall
Rev. Dr. Rob Hankinson
Rev. Dr. Don Mayne

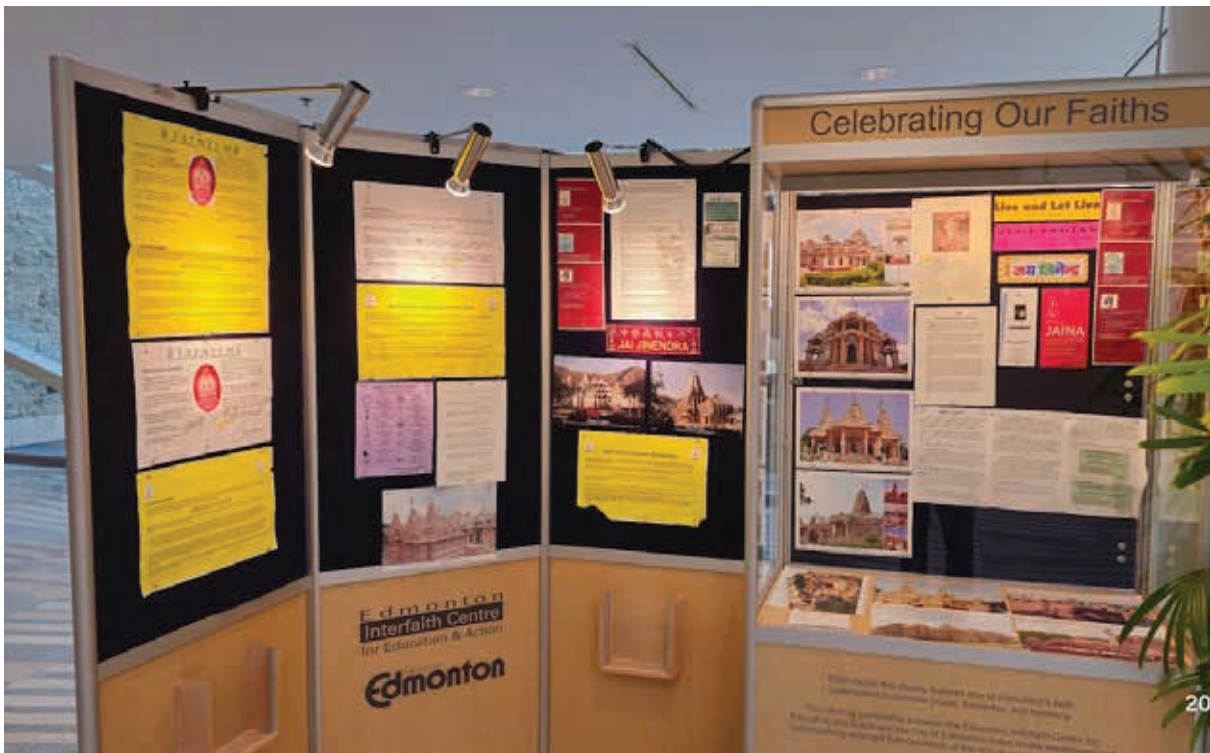
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Netta Phillet

Lewis Cardinal accepting the 2025 Interfaith Advocate Award



Jain display in city hall





ANNUAL REPORT

2024/2025

EDMONTON INTERFAITH CENTRE FOR EDUCATION & ACTION

10209 – 123 St. NW Edmonton. AB T5N 1N3

Phone 780-413-6159 Email intfaith@shaw.ca

Website edminterfaithcentre.ca

