PAGE 8 - EVERYTHING THAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT KEEPS CALGARY HAPPY

The Calgary Journal looks at five studies on how artists, money, kindness, cycling and friendships all contribute to people’s happiness

PHOTO BY MATT LAURIN/CALGARY JOURNAL

PAGE 24 - ANDREW KILLAM: AN ALCOHOLIC’S TRIAL BY FIRE

A Calgarian’s decade-long struggle with alcoholism, a failed liver and his newfound quest for sobriety

PHOTO BY EVAN MANCONI/CALGARY JOURNAL

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The Calgary Journal

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Designed by Ian Esplen
WHAT SONG MAKES YOU HAPPY?

Jordan Gooden, 27
Song: “Keep Your Head Up” by Andy Grammar
Why: It makes me feel good inside because it encourages people to keep your head up through thick and thin.
Reminds me of: Listening to the song before he goes to work as a photographer.

Elizabeth Bobrosky, 72
Song: Oh What A Beautiful Mornin’ from the 1943 musical Oklahoma!
Why: It puts me in a great mood and it sets her up for the whole day.
Reminds me of: growing up in a small town in Saskatchewan, where she played sports and interacted with her extended family.

Mike Holloway, 59
(2009 Country Gospel Whistler of the Year)
Song: Because He Lives (Hymn)
Why: It’s smooth and relaxing and it brings peace and calm to me.
Reminds me of: Helps strengthen his relationship with Christ and encourages him to share his God-given gift of whistling with the world.

Sarah Dubois, 18
Song: “Beautiful Day” by U2
Why: It makes me feel young.
Reminds me of: Listening to the song at home or on the road when taking trips with the family as a child.

Michael Truscello is currently a professor at Mount Royal University. He recently released a documentary, “Capitalism is the Crisis,” that examines the global austerity agenda.

The Square (2013)
Because it’s good to know that there are people in this world who want to make a better world.

Night Moves (2014)
Because changing the world isn’t easy, and understanding that struggle can be satisfying.

The Raid 2 (2014)
Because Iko Uwais is the best action star in the world today.

Hot Rod (2007)
Because sometimes the critics are wrong and you have to go punch-dancing in the woods.
City struggles over the bite of fluoride’s absence

Low-income kids and seniors are paying the price for taking fluoride out of Calgary’s drinking say some dentists and dental agencies

On a cold winter day, dental assistants inside the Dental Health Bus asked a couple of kids how they take care of their teeth. Another 161 children are on the waitlist for care.

From the outside, the bus looks like any ordinary trailer, but inside are two chairs, a sterilization area, an abbreviated reception desk with a printer and an x-ray machine. The Dental Health Bus is run by The Alex, a Calgary social service agency. It travels to lower income areas checking kids’ teeth and providing sealants to help prevent tooth decay.

The need is urgent because three years after Calgary City Council voted to remove fluoride from Calgary’s water Feb. 8, 2011, The Alex and other dental experts say dental decay in kids is worsening.

“These children are living in pain for months,” said Denise Kokaram, program lead of the Dental Health Bus. “We are seeing children that are seven years old that have every tooth in their heads decayed.”

Kokaram said the positive impact of the Dental Health Bus doesn’t compare to adding fluoride back into the water.

Calgary dentist Larry Stanleigh lobbied city council to add fluoride to Calgary’s drinking water. He said in a telephone interview that cavities are on the rise without it.

“Cavities have gone from little cavities to bombed-out teeth that we now have to remove,” said Stanleigh, who estimates he made $150,000 more in fluoride-related fillings and dental work.

Those most affected are children under 15 and seniors over 65, said Stanleigh.

He says there has now been a terrible shift of cost to low-income Calgarians.

“I had a 50 per cent increase in the fillings that I did and thus a 50 per cent increase in the cost,” said Stanleigh.

FLUORIDE’S TROUBLED PAST

Fluoride is a compound of fluorine and salts groups. It is found naturally, however synthesized fluoride is what is used in drinking water, toothpaste and mouthwash.

The fluoride debate started in 1957, when Calgarians voted to oppose adding fluoride to drinking water. Citizens voted against fluoride two more times in 1961 and in 1971.

However, in 1998, the tables turned when a panel of experts, (Stanleigh was one of them), came to City Council with the proposition that adding fluoride, at the optimal level of 0.7 mgs per litre could have significant benefits to public health.

When it was put to a citizen vote, Calgarians voted in favour of adding fluoride to the water.

Fluoride levels between 0.1 to 0.4 mgs per litre occur naturally in our water because of the Elbow and Bow rivers. An expert panel proposed adding enough to reach the optimal level. This motion then passed.

However, in 2011, Ward 7 Councillor Druh Farrell formally asked council to remove fluoride in a notice of motion. This time there was no expert panel consultation and no public vote on the issue.

Her motion was contrary to public health advice from the Alberta Health Services and several other organizations. Richard Musto, Calgary’s medical officer with AHS, told CBC in April 2011.

“We believe the evidence is clear that communal water fluoridation — which is an adjustment of the normal level of fluoride — safely reduces cavities in the people who drink the water,” Musto also said to CBC.

Stanleigh wrote an e-mail to city councillors imploring them to reconsider the decision of discontinuing fluoride, presenting evidence to the benefits it had for Calgary.

“I got seven aldermen emailing me back all stating that they had already made up their minds and that regardless of what was going to be presented to them, they were still going to be voting against it,” he said.


Opposed were former Ward 4 Gael Macleod, Ward 6 Richard Pootmans and former Ward 2 Gord Lowe. Mayor Naheed Nenshi was out of town when the vote took place.
According to the Notice of Motion, $750,000 was spent annually by the city on fluoride. Council then decided to split a one-time grant of $750,000 to two agencies: The Alex and Calgary Urban Projects Society (CUPS).

Most of the money, $585,000, went to The Alex with the stipulation that it be put in an endowment fund and the interest used to fund a dental program. The Alex used the city funds to help launch the Dental Health Bus in Jan. 2013.

With AHS and the two school boards, 16 schools were identified for a pilot program, to provide sealant treatments for Grade 2 and 6 students. Last year, the Alex did the program in another 31 schools that were identified as high-need. This year, the Alex is visiting 33 schools. In total, the Dental Bus has provided around 5,000 sealant treatments since it started.

The Calgary Urban Projects Society (CUPS) received the balance, or $165,000. Lorna Curran, communications manager for CUPS, says that it received the remaining $165,000 which financed a new dental clinic, staffed by volunteer dentists. CUPS hasn’t seen the impact of the fluoride being removed because it began serving children only in 2012.

"Prior to that our services were limited to extractions for adults," said Curran in an e-mail.

WHAT DO OTHER AGENCIES THINK?

Dr. Farrell’s Notice of Motion to remove fluoride mentions that the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Dental Association say that fluoridated water should not be given to infants. On the websites of each of these organizations, there is advocacy for the importance of proper fluoride consumption through the water supply.

The Ontario Ministry of Health released a statement from Dr. Arlene King in April of 2011 stating: “As Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, I am very concerned about the loss of fluoridated drinking water in certain communities in spite of consistent evidence that water fluoridation is safe and effective.”

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention stated “The proper amount of fluoride from infancy through old age helps prevent and control tooth decay. Community water fluoridation is a widely accepted practice for preventing and controlling tooth decay by adjusting the concentration of fluoride in the public water supply.”

Similarly, the American Dental Association (ADA) policy states “The Association endorses community water fluoridation as a safe, beneficial and cost-effective public health measure for preventing dental caries (cavities). This support has been the Association’s policy since 1950.”

Farrell still stands behind her anti-fluoride views. Her office sent the following Nov. 2014 email: “The science is still developing on whether fluoride consumption is effective, and even if it is, whether the health risks of consumption outweigh any benefits. Scientific American published an interesting article in January 2008. The Globe and Mail published articles both for and against fluoridation. While the debate continues, Calgary has [to] ensure that Calgarians have access to safe, clean drinking water.”

Farrell’s main argument for the removal was that it was easier to try to help low income families than to try to “medicate” the entire population.

Both The Alex and CUPS say that the initial funding will need to be increased to keep up with the dental care demand. Although the city is saving $750,000 a year, it has not put that money back into the community dental health.

Alberta Health Services has countered by funding a study by Lindsay McLaren, associate professor at the University of Calgary. She is comparing dental health of students in Grades 1 and 2 in Calgary with students in Edmonton, who still have fluoride in the water supply. Results are expected in spring 2015.
Albertans take fewer sick days

Lack of coherent sick leave legislation places decision on individual employers

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Albertans workers take the least amount of sick days compared to the rest of the country, which could result in the spread of illnesses and decreased productivity in the workplace.

But labour and policy experts say these problems could be alleviated if the Alberta government mandated paid sick leave, which is currently not included in the legislation.

According to Statistics Canada, full-time workers in Alberta only took — on average — six days off of work due to illness in 2013, which was less than the national average of seven days. By comparison, the statistics were higher for other provinces such as Newfoundland, where workers took nine days off.

Mark Daku, a McGill PhD student researching the politics of public health, blames the low number of sick days taken by Albertans on the lack of the province's sick leave legislation.

“While there is job protection in Canada for long-term illnesses and disabilities, there is very little job protection for short-term leave to address things like influenza. For example, in Alberta, there is no short-term job protection if an employee falls sick,” Daku said.

Jay Fisher, a spokesperson with Alberta’s Ministry of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour, confirmed that there is no legislation for paid sick leave in Alberta, leaving the responsibility of sick leave policy up to the employers.

By comparison, some provinces do have legislation for sick leave. For example, the website for the Labour Relations Agency of Newfoundland and Labrador states that “an employee who has been employed with the same employer for a continuous period of 30 days is entitled to seven days unpaid sick or family responsibility leave in a year.”

“Access to sick leave is crucially important for employees, and leaving that decision in the hands of individual employers would result in some Canadians having access to sick leave and some not,” Daku said. He added that “employees may decline to take time off work when they are sick because they are afraid to lose their jobs.”

It has certainly been the experience of 22-year-old Fort McMurray resident Sasha Dolbenev.

“I feel like I had to be hospitalized in order to stay home from work,” Dolbenev stated, referring to a previous job.

Dolbenev highlighted money as the biggest factor that kept her from staying home from work when she was sick. But when she did go to work sick, she felt unproductive and was concerned about spreading her illness to others.

Gary Johns, a management professor at Concordia University, confirmed in an email interview that concerns about finances and job security — just like the ones Dolbenev expressed — are what usually cause people to go to work sick.

And when that happens, according to Johns, it puts the employees themselves, their coworkers and their clients at risk of further health issues.

For instance, a report from World Health Organization (WHO) supports the argument that weaknesses in sick leave policy can have drastic impacts on the community pointing to the H1N1 pandemic coupled with the 2009 economic crisis in the U.S. as an example.

The report states that during this period “an alarming number of employees without the possibility of taking paid sick leave days attended work while being sick. This allowed H1N1 to spread into the workplace causing infections of some seven million co-workers in the U.S. alone.”

Locally, Dobenev can relate to that statistic.

“I’ve had many encounters at work with people around me being sick,” Dolbenev said. “I worked with a woman who had laryngitis and another who had strep throat and they were still coming into work. This affected my performance and mental state because I was constantly trying to avoid them, as I did not want to get myself sick.”

Some employers may choose not to provide their employees with adequate sick leave, something Johns said has to do with a fear that employees might abuse the policy.

However, Daku believes these employers are missing the point. A business loses money if employees aren’t working at their full potential and they can also spread that problem to others.

In addition, Canadian Labour Congress social and economic policy director Chris Roberts stated in an email interview that paid sick leave isn’t as costly as people may think it is.

For example, Roberts said the Parliamentary Budget Office found in the federal government, “paid sick leave accounts for a small fraction of departmental spending, ranging from 0.4 per cent to 2.7 per cent of total departmental expenditures.”

Nevertheless, the Alberta Employment Standards Code has not been revised to include sick leave policy since its formation in 1988.

But according to Daku, the benefits of mandating sick leave in Alberta greatly outweigh the perceived consequences.

“Individuals would be healthier, the public would be better protected against outbreaks, workplaces would be more productive and profitable, and simply guaranteeing an individual’s right to sick leave is a cost-free policy.”
The Calgary Public Library (CPL) is not achieving the provincial target for use, but its CEO says it has big plans to transform itself and to increase its number of users.

A survey conducted for the Alberta Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Alberta Ministry of Culture shows that 58.8 per cent of Alberta households use libraries, a figure lower than the provincial target but higher than Calgary’s rate of household usage.

The Alberta government target for library use is 70 per cent of households. However, 56 per cent of households in Calgary are using the CPL system according to its 2014 Customer Survey. In light of this, the CPL has plans to fully redefine itself as a community hub.

“We are in an information age, and libraries are becoming more important,” said Paul McIntyre, CEO of CPL. For him, libraries are the place to promote human and community connection.

McIntyre isn’t satisfied with Calgary usage. “We need to do better; hence, all the positive changes we are making, including dropping the card fee”

Alberta Municipal Affairs did not make anyone available to comment on how the 70 per cent provincial goal was determined, but the CPL considers it to be a good one.

“It is a reasonable target, and we are looking to increase (Calgary usage) further,” said McIntyre.

Valeree McKay, executive director of the Canadian Library Association, said libraries are one of the main support systems of our communities.

“Libraries are as important municipal infrastructures as water and gas pipelines,” said McKay. “Libraries know the pulse of our communities.”

Evan Woolley, city councillor for Ward 8 and CPL board member, said that CPL is changing. The organization hired a new CEO, eliminated membership fees, is building a new central branch and is expanding its programing and library collection.

Woolley said that with the new improvement system “We’re kicking butt” Woolley was surprised that only 56 per cent of households use CPL services.

“It is very interesting because CPL has the second largest circulation of materials in any city in Canada,” said Woolley. “Calgary must have the most avid readers in Canada”

CPL expects the elimination of membership fees will result in a total of 800,000 Calgarians using its services following trends at the Edmonton Public Library system (EPL), who cut the fee back in 2013.

“Expanding the library system is a challenge,” said Woolley, citing that a yearly population growth of 40,000 is difficult to accommodate.

The new central library is already under preliminary construction in the East Village. It is expected to cost $245 million and open in 2018. Library user Chantelle Potter supports the new library, saying, “I think that as a city we need to show that we have modern spaces for learning and art. A library is the perfect thing to invest in."

Another user, James Richards, expressed doubt. “I don’t know about all the money that’s being spent on it. I already like this one.”

Other initiatives to expand the usage of public libraries that are being discussed are providing some free printing, eliminating fees for use of meeting rooms by non-profits and community organizations and enhancing the library’s multimedia collection available for the public.

For Woolley it is frustrating to be compared with provincial targets when he feels that there may be a lack of commitment. “It is easy for the province to set a provincial target, and don’t give funding dollars to achieve it.”

According to the CPL the province of Alberta only provides 10 per cent of the funding of its over $55 million annual budget. The provincial government wasn’t available for comment on funding by the Calgary Journal’s deadline.
Calgary’s culture, cleanliness and economic prosperity have made it one of the world’s most livable cities, according to the Economist. But Vancouver author Charles Montgomery has said its urban sprawl is taking a tool on our overall happiness. The solution: building village-like communities within the sprawl and connecting them – something the city is already trying to do.

**WHAT ROLE DOES URBAN DESIGN PLAY?**

After cumulating data for five years, Vancouver author Charles Montgomery was able to identify a number of linkages between cities and the happiness of its inhabitants. He claims that the design of buildings, roads, and neighbourhoods influence how urbanites travel or spend their spare time and money — which all play a role in well-being.

According to his book *Happy City*, Calgary’s happiness is lagging behind other cities as a result of poor urban planning, with its sprawling suburbs being the biggest problem.

“If happiness means healthy, socially connected, free, and economically resilient, then dispersed communities in Calgary are very vulnerable,” he said.

However, it doesn’t appear this trend will change anytime soon. The city’s 2013-2017 Suburban Residential Growth report released earlier this year predicts that 94 per cent of Calgary’s population growth will be in the suburbs during the next five years.

“Calgary has simplified the city, in other words, separated every use of the city into different neighbourhoods,” Montgomery said. “By separating uses of the city, you spread peoples lives out so far, it has a damaging effect on their health and on their social lives.”

Montgomery added that Calgary’s growth has been built around one way of moving — the private car — which contributes to the problem at hand.

“Calgarians need to realize that their tax dollars have gone into massively subsidizing urban dispersal,” Montgomery continued. “Your wide roads, freeways are all subsidies for a way of living that is shortening [your] lives and affecting the way [you] interact with others.”

He said the municipal government, policy makers, and planners can combat this by creating a city that has closely connected communities within the suburbs.

Montgomery said such communities — that are walkable, dense, mixed-use villages — will foster happier relationships and thus a happier population.

Calgarians should not be afraid of building some denser mixed use villages into their suburban environments. Those nodes will make their lives easier.

“Calgarians needs to visualize a city where their children can walk to school, where they can transit to work or drive if they want to… [Calgary] needs to build more mixed-use villages within these communities so [their] lives aren’t as spread out.”

In order to accommodate this, Montgomery said the municipality must “build more freedom” into our city by building slightly denser communities, with more amenities and more opportunities for transit and cycling.

“I have to say that your Mayor Nenshi is taking a step in the right direction and providing a great example for other Canadian cities,” Montgomery noted. “One example of this is creating the minimum grid for separated bike tracks downtown.”

“It’s a bold move, but we’ve learned in other cities that one or two bike lanes doesn’t cut it. Unless you create a network, most people just won’t use it,” Montgomery concluded.

“Calgary, or at least this policy, is now being held up as a model for other cities around the continent.”

**IS URBAN SPRAWL REALLY A NEGATIVE?**

Nevertheless, David Down, senior architect coordinator of urban design and heritage for the City of Calgary, acknowledged the city will continue to spread.

In fact, the objective of the local government’s Municipal Development Plan is not to prevent sprawl by centralizing the population. Instead, Down said the city is striving to intensify existing areas and create complete suburban communities.

“We do have to acknowledge that we can’t possibly expect that everyone all of the sudden will want to live in high density housing,” he said.

“Though we are seeing a shift toward people wanting to live in high density circumstances.”

“The idea is that there will be shopping and employment within these areas as well, so [Calgarians] can have all of their work, play and living needs in their area,” he added, noting that
many suburban communities have been already achieved this. “We are striving to make the suburban communities complete communities and connect them with our established neighborhoods which have developed over time into complete communities.

We want to get away from this perception that we are an inner city and an outer city — we want to be complete city overall, made up of complete neighbourhoods.”

Dave Spencer purchased the land for EchoHaven, a suburban community located in the city’s far northwest where he and 23 other families will live, with the intention of creating an eco-minded community unlike inner-city neighbourhoods.

A potential example: developer Dave Spencer purchased the land for EchoHaven, an eco-minded suburban community located in the city’s far northwest where he and 23 other families will live.

Spencer said that urban sprawl is a pressing issue for many Calgarians, but he urged that residents should rethink the suburban model.

“In our case, we are offering an entirely different paradigm for how urban development can occur,” Spencer said. By taking the rules and reworking them, we are able to benefit the environment and benefit the well-being of the families that live there.”

“We have taken the development process a step further,” Spencer continued. “We are all likeminded people that selected this fringe oasis neighbourhood.”

HOW DOES A SENSE OF COMMUNITY TIE INTO HAPPINESS?
Building cohesive neighbourhoods, which foster relationships, is something Mark Anielski, economist and author of The Economics of Happiness: Building Genuine Wealth, said is essential for happiness on a municipal level.

“The approach that I have taken in economics is to measure what matters to well-being and measuring the conditions of well-being in our communities,” Anielski said.

“If we are serious about the economics of well-being, we should be concerned about the well-being of every household and every block and every neighbourhood in Calgary,” Anielski continued.

“We know from happiness research that the biggest detriment of happiness is relationships,” Anielski said, noting that policy makers, urban and government should monitor what is creating or preventing these relationships in each community.

“Is it because of urban design or because one community it is more walk-able than another, or maybe earnings are higher in one community than another? These are the [themes] we should be investigating.”

Developer David Spencer has set out to redefine what it means to live in Calgary’s suburbs by building a sense of community into his eco-friendly neighbourhood of Echohaven. PHOTO COURTESY OF GREEN ENERGY FUTURES

DAVID DOWN, City of Calgary senior architect, coordinator of urban design and heritage

Q&A

CULTURE AND HAPPINESS

Patti Pon, President & CEO, Calgary Arts Development

Q Is there a link between Calgary’s culture and happiness?

Arts and culture provide a way for all residents to connect with each other and their communities, which certainly increases happiness. Calgary Arts Development recently undertook a survey arts engagement in our city with a representative sample of Calgarians; 85 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that arts and culture venues make life in Calgary better.

Q What do you believe, culturally speaking, Calgary offers to the well-being of its patrons?

The diversity of Calgary’s arts sector means that all Calgarians connect with the arts in some way, whether it’s live music, a cultural festival, theatre, literary arts, dance or film. Artists are our storytellers, and help communicate the issues—whether perennial or current—important to a city and its citizens.

Q How have you seen the culture in Calgary evolve over the years?

The roots of Calgary’s arts community are strong, with many iconic festivals institutions founded decades ago, our artists are visionary and adaptable. Particularly with our year as a Cultural Capital of Canada in 2012, our arts scene gained greater visibility among the public and in turn, many new initiatives began.

Some answers edited for length and clarity
HAPPINESS

Happiness Finding #2: Study challenges society’s ‘tortured artist’ perception

Three Calgary artists respond to comparative study that debunks idea of artists’ inner turmoil

JUSTIN WILSON
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A 2013 study published in the academic journal, Economic Letters, has turned the clichéd idea of the tormented artist on its head.

The struggle of the artist — rife with depression and demons — isn’t new. The suicide of Vincent van Gogh, the theories of depression and mental illness surrounding Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Mozart and the darker works of Goya all point to inner torment.

Using prior research, employment rates, earnings and job satisfaction, the study spanning 49 European countries targeted professional artists and what researchers deemed “other workers.”

Using a rating scale, with 1 being “totally unhappy” and 10 being “totally happy,” the study found artists were happier in their work, scoring an average of 7.7 while “other workers” came in at 7.3.

The study points to artists’ ability to weave personal and professional lives together with more ease than those in business or trade roles. Likewise, artists generally enjoy a happier work-life balance, setting their hours and avoiding the confines of a set schedule.

WHAT THE ARTISTS HAVE TO SAY

The Calgary Journal asked three members of the city’s arts community to give us their views on creating art, staying positive and maintaining happiness.

DANNY VACON, MUSICIAN

It’s hard to talk about Calgary’s music community without mentioning Vacon. As the frontman for some of the city’s most well known acts, including The Dudes and HighKicks, his influence and unmistakable voice have become synonymous with the strength of Calgary’s music scene. He’s toured extensively throughout Canada, the U.S. and Europe, but it’s Calgary he calls home.

Performing here at 92.9 FM’s One Weekend Only event, Danny Vacon, with his powerful voice and trademark beard has shared the stage with some of mainstream music’s most well known acts.

PHOTO BY RYAN RUMBOLT/CALGARY JOURNAL

First, the bad news.

You’re going to die. Probably not today (fingers crossed), probably not tomorrow (still crossing) but it’s coming.

The good news is you’re not dead yet and what you choose to do with the time you have is up to you.

Disclaimer: Before you take my advice, remember this — I’m just one guy and I probably don’t know anything about anything. BUT, I also might be the happiest man you know, so...

Kurt Vonnegut said, “To practice any art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow. So do it.”

Make something. ANYTHING. Take a bunch of nothing and turn it into a something. Watch what happens. That. Who gives a rat’s ass if no one thinks it’s amazing. It didn’t exist before.

THAT’S AMAZING. Who are those guys everyone talks about for an hour on Sundays, or in Temple or in a Mosque? Creators. People are crazy about creators!

“And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

Ok. That’s a bit cocky on his or her part. But it’s a rad old message. Now you try. It should go something like this:

Blank (your name) saw what blank made, and behold, it totally didn’t exist before. Blank didn’t care if it was considered amazing by others because it made blank feel like a champ!

When you feel like a champ, you radiate... uh... something (I’m no scientist) that EVERYONE picks up on. They treat you differently. They treat you better. Then they leave you and treat whoever they see next better too.

And on and on.

So, again, make something. Anything. Your heart will thank you.

~ DANNY VACON~
It is pretty incredible to think that as an artist, I get to pursue my dream and follow my passion. No matter how much struggle and hard work it takes, the opportunity of having autonomy, of exploring expression and of creating new things, brings about a beautiful happiness. 

The Bad Portrait Project started for many reasons, but one of the main reasons was because I was frustrated with the idea that angst and depression were being celebrated in the art world more than joy and happiness. I wanted to see if I could create a pop art movement that celebrated people, flaws and joy. And I am so lucky that it has found success, but I think that that is a testament to the idea that people too want to gravitate to happiness more than its opposite.

Calgary is one of the coolest places on earth. We have this incredibly unique opportunity where we still have space to develop our identity and what we want to present to the world. It’s beautiful to watch different areas and people in Calgary grab a hold of each other, support each other and really try to make a great mark on the world with our big hearts and bigger ideas.

Being creative is so empowering, and fulfilling. I am so lucky that I can try any idea that pops into my head. Obviously, not all of them will become the collected masterpieces you hope for, but every time you take a chance on a painting or in life it develops into something else. And that’s where all the big smiles and huge dreams happen — in that playtime. I try to remind myself of that rule outside of the studio as well. I wish we could all just play how we like and see what we can build.

~ MANDY STOBO~

She’s all about joy. Her work, both original and abstract, has caught the eyes of comedian Louis C.K., Canadian media icon, George Stroumboulopoulos and has even graced the cover of Jann Arden’s newest album. Though Stobo’s work spans a variety of styles, each bringing its own unique appeal, she’s become quite well known for her “Bad Portrait Project” — a colour-laden, unorthodox take on human portraiture.

Mitchell says that art is about letting your passions guide you in whatever direction they choose for you. It’s about finding joy in failure and overcoming doubts. 

The power and legacy of motion picture film has always been reliant on the human connection. What drew me to become a filmmaker was, when I left a film, I found myself missing these characters, longing to know more about them.

Still being fairly new to the industry, I have had the privilege to be part of numerous genres of filmmaking, from documentaries and music videos, to narrative films. It’s allowed me to not only shape my craft through the accessibility to explore a number of stories from different perspectives, but to collaborate with people and characters on the emotional level that attracted me in the first place.

Film has allowed me to step into the lives of the musicians, artists, and those who have influenced me, to be witness to a side of them that goes beyond conversation, or outer values. Each person or character entrusts me with the responsibility to nurture moments in their life and tell their story. We share laughter, heartbreak, struggles and tears, capturing a genuine truth and forming a unique bond. Together, we face moments of astonishment, and absolute beauty in the midst of fear — fear of failure, fear of judgment, fear of yourself.

The trust to take on these adversities brings a strong camaraderie that I will never take for granted.

Calgary fosters a community that allows for artists to not only thrive, but to make the cultural significance of this city our own. The community relishes in its local talent and gives its complete unwavering support, with no competitive edge. Like a family, we are growing in tandem together.

If it weren’t for this city, and the audience that I was gifted with, my film career would have never progressed. For this I owe everything to Calgary; Calgary doesn’t owe me anything.

~ BROCK DAVIS MITCHELL~
HAPPINESS

Happiness Finding #3:
Money can buy you happiness

Calgary Journal’s visit to a Kensington coffee shop backs study findings that suggest using your money to buy for others is the key

Michael Norton, associate professor of business administration at the Harvard Business School (HBS) and co-author of Happy Money, studied the longstanding question — can money buy you happiness?

As it turns out the answer is yes, particularly when you buy for other people.

In a TED Talk, a short video presentation to spread ideas of thought leaders today, Norton said “we resonate with this phrase that is found in religions and self-help books: money can’t buy you happiness. I wanted to let you know today that that is wrong and that, in fact, if you think that then you just aren’t spending it right."

In one experiment, Norton gave college undergrads money to spend on themselves or on others. They received either $5 or $20.

Some of Norton’s work is published in the HBS Working Knowledge archive. In one experiment, those who spent money on themselves didn’t feel any different while those who spent on others felt a lot happier.

Norton also discussed money and coffee. “If you give an undergrad $5, it looks like coffee to them and they run over to Starbucks and spend it as fast as they can,” he joked.

With coffee, money, and happiness at play, the Calgary Journal recently visited a coffee shop to chat with people about Norton’s findings.

In a Kensington coffee shop, we caught up with some coffee aficionados about happiness-inducing scenarios.

JOHN ARCURRI AND CALLIE REIDULFF Q&A

Q: Would you rather buy yourself a coffee or someone else a coffee?

John I have gone through a lot of life changes and I think that this new self-discovery that I am on makes me think that I do feel better about myself when I buy for others. I feel that when you put that little piece of good karma out there that something in the universe will come back to you and it will reward you. It gives you that little piece of happiness.

Callie I don’t think that I have ever just randomly bought a stranger coffee. I have often thought about it though. But definitely if I go out with a friend I would buy them a coffee as a gift because we all love in different ways and one of the ways that I give love is through gifts.

Q: To what extent do you think giving increases your happiness?

Callie I think that it comes down to the way that you give and receive love. I don’t know if you have ever heard of the (book) The 5 Love Languages, but some people give love through gifts. It is just a sense of an offering to someone and it is your gift to them and it is representing that. You are just giving them your love.

John I am more tangible. I really like the reaction that you can get. It can just change someone’s perspective. I think that we are all so focused on ourselves so the moment that you can take away from yourself and give to someone else it changes your perspective and that one little moment of happiness that you have given to someone it catches on and then you want to do it again.

Q: Can you think of a specific time that you gave something to someone and it made you happy?

John It was my grandma’s 80th birthday and she was kind of a role model that you want to follow and she taught me so much about my life. I thought that I would give her a gift of wisdom that she taught me. It made me look inwards and find stuff that had sentimental values or just changed the way that different things represented things that she taught me. One of those things was that tea can heal anything, it can teach you something, it is a moment of reflection and it can help you grow. I kind of put that together and I got her some tea cups and some tea and when I put the gift together it was very emotional and even though it was just the exchanging of a gift it was powerful.

Callie For me, an example would be that I made a box of chocolates for my boyfriend who is allergic to a lot of things. A box of chocolates is something kind of easy that a lot of people give but he can’t have that because of his allergies. I took the time to figure out what chocolates he would like and I made the chocolates myself and a little box. To see the joy on his face and the time that I had spent was really rewarding.
LAURA BYSOUTH AND CODY JENNINGS

Q: Would you rather buy yourself a coffee or someone else a coffee?
Cody I would buy a coffee for her (gesturing to Laura Bysouth). But a coffee is a coffee. I don’t complicate my life. If I had to choose I would say, “Screw you, I’m drinking this coffee.”
Laura If I was forced to choose I would probably choose someone else. It would make them happy.

Q: To what extent do you think giving increases your happiness?
Cody Giving is all about mindset. Whether you just want to make an impact on someone’s life and you’re just doing it because they are a person too, it is all about where you are coming from and why you are doing it, or even if you need a reason to do it. Generosity is generosity. It is about being a good person but then again there is a difference between giving a homeless man $20 and going out with my girlfriend for coffee.
Laura It is all perspective. It is how you give and not necessarily what it is but how you give of yourself. If you give from your heart and you have good intentions what you want that money or that gift to do then it will make you happy.

Q: Can you think of a specific time that you gave something to someone and it made you happy?
Laura This one time that I made my grandma a blanket. She still has it and she loves it. She tells me all the time how it is really warm in the winter and not too hot in the summer. It just makes me happy to hear that she is enjoying it.
Cody When you give something to someone that they will actually love and cherish that feeling gets reverted back to you. It reflects on you too. Happy is happy.

TOM HUBSCHMID AND COLTON DYCK

Q: Would you rather buy yourself a coffee or someone else a coffee?
Tom Do you require honesty? (laughs) I would keep it for myself. The scenario that I had in mind was that I would come into this coffee shop wanting to get a coffee for myself, probably because I was depressed and wanted to be happier.
Colton Coffee? I don’t like coffee so I would give it away.

Q: To what extent do you think giving increases your happiness?
Colton It’s what we are made to do. Not to hoard things but to be yearning to give things away. We are so much happier when we are doing the things that we are meant to do.
Tom I am excited and giddy when I have bought a gift for somebody like buying a friend a coffee or lunch when we go out. It’s good for the soul. I think I feel a little more human when I do it. Like I am a part of something bigger in the world.

Q: Can you think of a specific time that you gave something to someone and it made you happy?
Colton It is hard to choose. But it was about a year ago and we had just finished watching Band of Brothers and it was the intermission and we were standing at a gas station and there was a guy standing there and I just felt Jesus tell me that I was supposed to pay for his gas so I tapped him on the shoulder and asked him if he was buying gas and he said, “Yeah.” Then I said “Can I pay for your gas?” and his brain exploded. He was like, “What if I had a huge truck?” and I said, “I didn’t ask what kind of vehicle you had. I just asked if I could pay for your gas.” So then I paid for his gas and a pack of gum that he wanted. It’s just money. Some answers edited for length and clarity.
HAPPINESS

Happiness Finding #4: Commuter cycling linked to lower happiness levels than other exercise

While ‘Health or Happiness’ study suggests biking to work might come up short, some YYC commuters disagree

STUDY SNAPSHOT
Biking to and from work is a great way to get in shape and to enhance your health, but according to a U.K based study, it may not be the best way to increase your overall wellbeing.

The study, “Health or Happiness? What is the Impact of Physical Activity on the Individual?” published in the Kyklos Journal of Social Sciences in 2010, examined the impact of competitive, recreational, and utilitarian forms of walking and cycling.

Utilitarian biking came up short, as it didn’t show the overall health and emotional wellbeing benefits compared to other forms of exercise. The study suggested that because of the external dangers that cyclists face such as other motorists, poor weather, and bottlenecked roadways, they are less likely to experience an increase in their own happiness.

SOME CALGARY BIKE COMMUTERS REFUTE FINDINGS

The Calgary Journal caught up with two Calgarians who disagree with the findings, saying biking to and from work has many benefits that in most cases help to increase their happiness.

Rachel Delacretaz-Jaunich is new to Calgary and new to commuting to work on her bike. She started in June.

"Right now I like being outside," says the former Victoria resident, adding, "I feel like I’m getting my exercise, so that makes me feel good mentally.”

She admits travelling alongside traffic can be scary, but she tries to avoid dangers by sticking to the bike paths and sidewalks. “Drivers don’t really pay attention to you no matter how brightly lit up you are.”

Although she notes the risks, she also insists the commuter journey helps her to feel better about herself. “It grounds me,” she says. “It gives me time to reflect on the day, and it just makes me feel good.”

Delacretaz-Jaunich says she’s eager to see how winter conditions will impact her travels.

Bike commuter Randall Berlin has experienced winter cycling, which he says is stressful.

Berlin acknowledges a sense of dread that comes knowing the winter commuting season has arrived. He says that’s why he no longer commutes during the snowy months.

“I’m sharing the roads with cars in the winter and it’s scarier because if I hit a piece of ice and I go down then I’m in trouble,” he says.

He adds the winter commute requires more time and effort because of having to lug his work clothes back and forth.

“It’s not a huge amount of time, but it’s five or ten minutes more in your morning that sometimes I don’t have, so it’s easier to jump in the car and drive,” he says.

However, the fair weather cyclist insists biking to and from work gives him an overall sense of happiness. He says not only is he reducing his environmental footprint, he’s also saving money, spending less time in rush hour, and improving his physical health.

“I think biking is good for your well-being in lots of respects,” he says. “It’s a form of exercise, so if you can get it by commuting to and from work then it’s just done.”

While both cyclists understand the drawbacks of “utilitarian cycling,” they both view the benefits as contributing to higher levels of happiness.

Randall Berlin says he loves biking to and from work in the summer, but admits that commuting in the winter is just too dangerous, and hectic. PHOTO BY TIFFANY RITZ/CALGARY JOURNAL

Medical resident Rachel Delacretaz-Jaunich is pretty new to commuting to work on her bike, however she is eager to see how it affects her wellbeing, and is planning on sticking it out through the winter season. PHOTO BY TIFFANY RITZ/CALGARY JOURNAL
Happiness Finding #5: Study suggests look no further than your friends

Three Calgary seniors share thoughts on age-old question

Remember the days when happiness meant spending lunch hours swinging off monkey bars with your best friend? Or maybe happiness meant swapping Pokémon cards after school or dressing up Barbie’s together?

Maybe you grew up with that best friend, maybe they fell out of your life and you didn’t find best-friendship until later, but a 2007 study “Looking To Happy Tomorrows With Friends: Best And Close Friendships As They Predict Happiness,” published in the Journal of Happiness Studies has found that – while the monkey bars certainly had their appeal – the friendships you develop are an important factor in establishing happiness.

The study surveyed 280 college students and found that having a strong relationship with a best friend was the only significant predictor of happiness. The study additionally states that individuals are happier when they experience close friendships and have a best friend.

As naturally, the Calgary Journal sat down with three friends to chat about happiness. However, these three women have lived well past both their monkey bar swinging days and their turbulent 20s.

Margaret Duddy, 71, Iris Hillenbrand, 77, and Lillian Leonard, 73, were just finishing their lunch at downtown’s Kerby Centre. Earlier that day, the three friends had enjoyed an exercise class.

Duddy and Hillenbrand have known each other for over 20 years, they met while working in administration at the University of Calgary.

“She left the department I was working in and someone said to me, ‘Oh you’ll have to meet Iris, she’s from Saskatchewan too,’” Duddy said about Hillenbrand with a chuckle. “And it was just a perfect match.”

Hillenbrand nodded affirmatively, “Yes, Margaret’s always upbeat and energetic and you can feed off that. Lillian is steady as a rock.”

Duddy and Hillenbrand met Lillian Leonard just about three years ago. Hillenbrand and Leonard had been taking a spirituality course together at the University of Calgary.

“We got to having a chat,” said Leonard with a smile. “And I thought, my goodness, a prairie flower – that’s because I am from Manitoba – and here I am with these Saskatchewan people.”

The trio giggled good-naturedly.

When it came to discussing happiness, the three friends had a few pieces of advice.

“I think, in life, you have to look at people and take them as they are,” said Leonard. “Accept it and worry about the things that really matter. Health, wealth – that’s a biggie – that type of thing.”

Hillenbrand said that: “You make your own happiness. You are as happy as you choose to be. I think that’s about it.” She added that being active, eating well, getting plenty of sleep, being involved with the community and being social all add to finding happiness.

“Or climb up a mountain in your red outfit – that’s Margaret,” Hillenbrand added.

As for Duddy, she said that happiness is about taking each day as it comes.

“When one day seems like a crisis you’ve just got to sleep on it. Then the next day you can have a better view of it and you can move on. No matter what. You’re boyfriend dumps you, you break your knee…”

“Which Margaret did,” interrupted Hillenbrand with a laugh.

Indeed, Leonard added she thinks it is important to remember that when things aren’t good for you, they could always be worse for someone else.

“You have to be optimistic all the time,” Leonard said. “And have the belief that when something bad happens something good will also come about.” She additionally feels that when dealing with something negative, sitting and moping will never help.

Hillenbrand and Duddy agreed.

“If you want to drive people away just complain all the time. You’ll send them running and hiding,” said Hillenbrand pointedly.

As for Leonard, she said that she does not inflict how she is feeling on others.

“Because I do not think that is fair either – to cloud up their lives.”

SARAH COMBER
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Margaret Duddy, 71, has always had a passion for the outdoors and still spends her Tuesdays and Fridays climbing the Rockies with friends and family.

PHOTO BY SARAH COMBER/CALGARY JOURNAL

Iris Hillenbrand, 77, believes that helping others and volunteering is a great way to find happiness. She has volunteered at the Calgary Public Library for over 20 years.

PHOTO BY SARAH COMBER/CALGARY JOURNAL

Lillian Leonard, 73, said that it is important to be thankful for what you already have, “because it could have been a whole lot worse over the years.”

PHOTO BY SARAH COMBER/CALGARY JOURNAL
THE LENS

Bundled up for the love of sport

As the temperature drops and the snow begins to fall, many Calgarians are excited to spend the day in the cold doing some of the more extreme winter sports.

KASSIDY CHRISTENSEN, OLIVIA CONDON, TERA SWANSON
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FAT BIKING

Since the original fatbike was created in 1980, the last five years have seen a big resurgence in the extreme sport. With heavy-duty tires, four to five times the size of regular bicycle tires, these beasts can cut through thick snow and sand and have been used to bike across the Sahara and to the South Pole. 27-year-old Cody Bell has been into the sport for the last two winters in Alberta and looks forward to exploring more in 2015.

Cody Bell said the biggest thing he’s learned was learned fast. “If you don’t like to crash, do not ride on snow.” PHOTO BY OLIVIA CONDON/CALGARY JOURNAL

With Calgary in a snow-covered deep freeze for more than half of the year, Cody Bell says he’s glad he took up fat biking. “I love to ride and finally I have the means to ride all year round, even in the snow.” PHOTO BY OLIVIA CONDON/CALGARY JOURNAL

PHOTO BY OLIVIA CONDON/CALGARY JOURNAL
SNOW KITING

Snowkiting has recently grown in popularity locally, and more people are taking advantage of windy days.

Patrick Sulatisky, owner of Glory Kiteboarding, has been snowkiting for roughly 15 years and started his own company in 2007. “It wasn’t really a big thing, nobody could get involved if they saw it and wanted to try it,” Sulatisky said. Sulatisky grew the once small snowkiting community in Alberta and shares his experience and knowledge of the sport to help others. This extreme sport is awe-inspiring to on-lookers and is heavily based on technical experience, Sulatisky said, to help reduce the dangers associated with the sport.

ICE CLIMBING

While many climbers hang up their ropes for the season when the cool weather hits, some trade in their climbing shoes for crampons, and tackle frozen waterfalls instead of rock-faced cliffs.

Matthew Ford, a Mount Royal University student, was first introduced to the sport in 2011 while working at Mountain Equipment Co-op in Calgary. The store offered a day dedicated to getting inexperienced climbers out on the ice, and his interest took off from there.

Ford said the sport was pretty high risk compared to most others, even to other forms of climbing.
With the proposed Keystone XL pipeline hitting another roadblock in its path to construction, First Nations communities are continuing to speak up against its potential detriments to the land they hold dear.

And all the while, government officials and advocates of the pipeline say that building it will be of great economic interest to the first nations stakeholders, and in doing so they highlight the divide that exists, and has always existed between First Nation, and non-First Nation culture in Canada. “For the non-indigenous culture it’s ‘we can see a price on a rock’, whereas for the indigenous culture we see spirit in a rock, and the spirit is to be maintained with purity,” said Dion Simon, who provides support and guidance to aboriginal students at Mount Royal University’s Iniskim Centre.

In his book Dancing With a Ghost, author Rupert Ross called this divide “natural science vs. supernatural belief,” after seeing it first hand in his work with remote First Nation communities in northwest Ontario. Though this theme can apply to many facets of First Nation life compared to non-First Nations, when applied to the land that the pipeline will be built on, it’s easy to see the difference.

In the “natural science” camp, the pipeline’s proposer – Calgary based TransCanada Corp. is the scientific and technological innovator. Transporting oil is one thing, but transporting raw bitumen is another. Bitumen – a thicker, less refined version of its crude oil cousin – requires additional chemical and diluents to even be possible to transport through a pipeline.

“We have deep respect for the land, where we differ is that we believe 100 per cent that this is a safe project,” Mark Cooper, a spokesperson for TransCanada, said.

However in a March 31, 2014 audit of TransCanada’s environmental protection program, the National Energy Board found the company to be “non-compliant” in 11 of the 17 categories audited, and while TransCanada has made steps to correct these non-compliances, a lasting effect still remains with First Nations people.

“That’s really the question on probably every indigenous mind in Canada, when do you allow the earth to recuperate and to rest?” Simon said.

This question cuts to the core of the concerns raised by the “supernatural belief” camp. If you think back to a time before any settlers came to Alberta, and before there were any industries that met our basic needs, the earth was everything from the bedroom and living room, to the kitchen and church. For thousands of years the different First Nations communities all throughout Canada shared this in common.

Simon said, “In our traditional laws, the first natural law is to be stewards of the land,” which means allowing the earth to replenish itself so there are always resources for future generations.

“For the non-indigenous culture it’s ‘we can see a price on a rock’, whereas for the indigenous culture we see spirit in a rock.”

DION SIMON, Plains Cree

The backbone of their way of life, their provider of sustenance, and the source of their supernatural beliefs all resided in the land they lived on. Building a pipeline through this is similar to a company knocking down the house you have lived in your whole life to build a shopping mall. Even if you will be handsomely compensated, the point isn’t about the money; it is about the value you place in that house, and the accumulated memories and stories that cannot simply be bought.

But instead of only one lifetime of memories and stories, the land holds thousands of generations worth to First Nation people who still practice the beliefs, and who still revere the land. Even though we now live in the 21st century, where many First Nations communities rely less and less on the land to provide sustenance, a rich cultural heritage that still actively practices and reveres customs from the past still very much does exist, but through the years First Nations communities have been faced with the decision of adapting to the prevalent culture in Canada, or ceasing to exist.

And they have adapted, but so has the “natural science” camp, of which TransCanada is only one of many. Nowadays TransCanada has an Aboriginal and First Nations relations committee, an Aboriginal human resource strategy, and has facilitated workshops to reconcile economic sustainability with traditional and cultural practices.

But without both sides coming to a more complete understanding of the other’s culture, and why their values are so important, that adaptation with continue to be makeshift at best. With a complete understanding, both sides can move forward and adapt to the changing world together.

“We have two different lenses, two different views on mother earth, and it’s only a matter of time before they both align and both cultures see the same thing at the same time,” Simon said.
Whole foods help ward off depression

British study reveals diet full of vegetables, fruits, and fish can protect your mental health

Monitoring diet and watching what goes into your mouth is a great way to stay in shape and improve your physical health but a study from Britain reveals that eating whole foods can help your mental health as well.

The 2009 study looked at a diet of whole foods which included vegetables, fruits, and fish in contrast to a processed food diet consisting of refined grains, high fat dairy products, fried foods and the association it may have with depression.

After analyzing 3,486 participants and their diet, researchers found that people in the highest percentile of a whole food pattern had lower odds of depression than those in the lowest percentile. They also found that high intake of processed food was associated with increased odds of depression.

More specifically according to the study, it is suggested “that consumption of fruits, vegetables and fish affords protection against the onset of depressive symptoms five years later, whereas a diet rich in processed meat, chocolates, sweet desserts, fried food, refined cereals and high-fat dairy products increases vulnerability.”

So why haven’t more people taken the plunge into whole food eating? It is easy to point out the cost of keeping up with a wholesome diet. Venturing into a whole foods or natural foods store can cost much more than the mega grocery stores. And some people want quick and easy food to help them keep up with their fast-paced lifestyle.

But eight-year vegetarian Rachel Smith says there are simple steps to take to start living the whole foods lifestyle. “Start with an apple or orange for breakfast just to really simplify it.”

Smith works fulltime at the Community Natural Foods store across from the Chinook LRT station and gives tours throughout the store to help educate customers about eating healthy. Smith recognizes it can be hard to find a starting place to try to add new things to a diet especially when some health food people can come off as overbearing. However Smith says, “It can be as simple as replacing a sugary breakfast cereal with a piece of fruit.” And adds that it is just as quick and easy as processed foods with the exception that whole foods are more nutrient rich which will help sustain you more.

Jodi Alexander, a 30-year-old Community Natural Foods shopper and mother agrees with Smith and adds, “Just pick one thing and go from there. It can be a daunting path. It is truly a lifestyle change. So just pick one thing and go from there and keep adding on.”

Alexander has been consciously watching her diet for the last five years and says there is a definite benefit to eating whole foods that she notices not only in herself but in her young daughter Hayden.

“There is definitely an affect 100 per cent. I can see it right away in her and I can feel it myself too. My cognitive function, skin, energy level, everything improves if I am eating clean. I feel good and happy and if I am not I am cranky and grumpy so it is pretty obvious for me that whole foods are great.”

Torben Belling is another Community Natural Foods shopper that agrees with the study and really believes that whole foods can help ward off depression. Belling who is in his late 60s says he and his wife started eating whole foods and organic 15 years ago to help their health.

Belling says whole foods “Taste better. They absolutely affect my moods and my health.”

Even though he is committed to the whole foods lifestyle Belling admits he like to cheat from time to time with his choice of food, potato chips. “I am as bad as the next guy.”

Belling says that you can see the affects of having a society that eats a lot of processed foods. ‘Just look at our health care system and how it is going down hill,” he says. “I think the young people of today have got to think about what they are eating because they are going to pay the bill. The more young people eating processed the worse it is going to be.”

Although the study doesn’t point out why whole foods are good preventers of depression, Smith, Alexander, and Belling all agree that whole foods can affect your health positively both physically and mentally and can be a stepping stone to leading a healthy and happier life.
Calgarian Cory Nespor quit a well paying job and moved to a new country in hopes of making a life change, but he got so much more than that—a career as an artist.

That new career is miles away from his first job as an electrician. But nine years into that career, he packed up his life and moved to New Zealand.

“I was an electrician for 13 years and I realized it wasn’t who I was as a person,” says the 34-year old artist.

While Nespor was living in New Zealand, he carried around a notebook where he encouraged people to share their words of wisdom in the notebook he carried around.

“They spoke to me and started to inspire me while I was there,” says Nespor, “I started matching the words in the book to images and started painting.”

Those typography paintings were made out of plywood and designed with pencils, markers, and acrylic paints. Each showcased the different words of wisdom in the notebook he carried around.

After finishing 11 of the paintings, Nespor submitted one of them to Depot Artspace—a local gallery in New Zealand. Linda Blincko, a curator at Depot Artspace offered him an exhibition.

 “[Nespor’s] work is really well executed and some of the messages are poignant and evocative and people identified with them... It’s both inspiring and accessible.”

LINDA BLINCKO, Art Curator

This year, Nespor was an artisan at Calgary’s Art Market & Craft show.

Show manager, Nichole Windblad, says Calgary’s Art Market & Craft show was a great platform for Nespor.

“He’s an up and coming artist in Calgary so this is fantastic exposure for him” says Windblad, “his adventure starts by building his clientele at art market”.

Nespor would like to eventually publish the notebook that started it all for him.

“When I have enough of the body of work to kind of intersperse that then I think it could be something more realistic, but right now it’s still kind of early.”
Calgary artists are banding together to create their own shows, as well as set up their own shops, because they say there are too few places in the city to sell and display their work.

Alberta College of Art and Design student Naomi Reinhart has experienced that difficulty firsthand, stating, “Calgary is a hard city to get into any gallery’s. There’s a lot artist run gallery’s and the people still have to work second jobs.”

This struggle was deepened with the closure of Art Central at the end of 2013, where local artists gathered to showcase their art and create it.

Local artist Ljubica Todorovic, who also owns Sketch Art Supplies and Picture Framing, agrees, “Gallery’s are tough to get in to, it’s competitive.”

But Reinhart, who is working towards a bachelor of design, says joining together with other artists can allow you to reach a larger audience and potential partners.

“That’s how you make your living, showing people what you have done, try to sell your work and try to find a reputation. It’s more networking too, you’re going to see a lot of other artists and meet new people and collaborate with new people”

An example of this is the Low Brow Art Show, which runs until December 20th at Bleeding Rose Tattoo. The show, which is taking place in the front lobby of the small shop, displays work from Todorovic, Francis V, Alain Daigle and Chris Armstrong.

In a phone interview, Todorovic explained, “We said lets have a show to promote the two businesses and the artists involved” – referring to both Bleeding Rose and Sketch Art Supplies and Picture Framing.

“The things is we didn’t resort to using a tattoo shop. We did it on purpose to promote the artists that work there so that they can sell their work and tattoo from it and to promote my store.”

Todorovic explained that approach is vitally important for Calgary artists.

“You have to go out there and you have to find venues or start a venue.”

But some artists aren’t just organizing shows to display their work. They’re setting up shops. One of them is Paul Van Ginkel, who opened the Van Ginkel Art Gallery in Inglewood, which exclusively represents his art.

Van Ginkel, who has been a professional artist for 30 years, says opening a gallery in a city he’s lived in since 1973 and was instrumental in inspiring his western art paintings, was another big step in promoting himself as a fine artist.

“To have an actual gallery that wasn’t necessarily my ultimate goal, I was primarily in search of a suitable studio, however I hit the jackpot with this location because it has my gallery on the main level and my studio on the lower level.”

Van Ginkel says he understands that living in Calgary there is greater demand for Western art – such as portraits of cowboys and equine animals. But that’s no excuse for artists to not create their own showcases in the city because there remains an interest in all forms of art.

“I’d venture to say that there is far more media exposure for contemporary art which includes abstract verses western art.”

Nonetheless, some artists including Naomi Reinhart have already given up on selling work in Calgary.

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07 LONDON CALLING
BRITPOP - CHARLIE MANCHESTER - INDIE - NEW WAVE

08 WACKEN METAL BATTLE
BLACKEST SIN + BURNING EFFIGY
+ HELLBORN DEATH ENGINES

09 WACKEN METAL BATTLE
BLACKEST SIN + BURNING EFFIGY
+ HELLBORN DEATH ENGINES

13 IMPROV AGAINST HUMANITY

15 FAKE MUSTACHE

17 HANG THE DJ
NO COVER BEFORE 10PM
RETRO - NEW WAVE - CLASSIC ALTERNATIVE - GOTH - INDUSTRIAL - BRITPOP

20 ADHOC SKETCH COMEDY

22 LOUDER THAN LOVE

23 OH SHIT ALBUM RELEASE
CADAVER DOG + PERVERSE
+ MAGDALENE + KEITH MORRISON BAND

24 BAD GIRLS CLUB YYC

29 HIGH VOLTAGE VARIETY HOUR
BLACKEST SIN + TRAIN BIGGER MONKEYS

30 JERU THE DAMAJA
R A V E N O U S + LOYAL
+ DRAGON FLI EMPIRE + SUICIDE KINGS

31 HANG THE DJ
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Heirs to Calgary’s heavy metal throne

Throne of Vengeance continue to establish itself as one of the city’s most dedicated local groups

To many, Throne of Vengeance might be a familiar name; the group is very involved in Calgary’s music scene and has headlined the Calgary Metalfest, Boonstock and played the main stage at countless venues throughout the city.

The band has also been crowned as Calgary’s best rock band in 2011 and again in 2013 by the Calgary Beer Core, an organization that has been promoting alternative music in Calgary for over 10 years.

Throne of Vengeance has established itself as a high energy four piece act that strives to create a fusion of traditional metal sound and modern groove. Forming out of the remnants of Tommy Holt and Trevor Cobb’s former band, Throne of Vengeance eventually assimilated Trevor’s brother Riley Cobb as their bassist and, after passing up a few other candidates, signed on Brady Side as their lead guitarist.

Though talented musicians in their own right, they have gained much of their recognition through dedication to the Calgary music scene and their work with legendary album producer, Paul Sabu.

Sabu, who has worked alongside the likes of David Bowie and Alice Cooper, continues to work with Throne of Vengeance. Tommy Holt, frontman of the group, says his experience is a real asset to the band.

“He really helped with the overall flow of our albums,” Holt said, “He helped us make every track sort of melt into the next one.”

Sabu came into contact with the band through the sheer luck of sharing a mutual friend. While his finishing touches can only compliment what the band brings to the table, with Throne of Vengeance Sabu has plenty of talent to work with.

“I love these guys and I have been fortunate enough to have worked on their last two CDs,” Sabu said in an email to the Calgary Journal.

“Throne of Vengeance is pure synergy in action... If anyone was to look up the definition of a band, it wouldn’t surprise me if Throne of Vengeance is used as a definitive reference.”

Being recognized and rewarded by the local community has been extremely motivating for the band. Brady Side, lead guitarist of Throne of Vengeance, said it has pushed them to be much more active in their own backyard.

“The local scene is one of the big driving forces behind the band. We take part in as much of the scene as possible, and we’ve started challenging other bands to do the same,” he said.

Brett Whittingham, the drummer for Chron Goblin, another local band which often shares the stage with Throne of Vengeance, describes the band as ambassadors of the local music scene.

In fact, most of the group is involved with other musical projects while still maintaining a dedication to Throne of Vengeance. Brothers Riley and Trevor Cobb are also involved in a local Alice in Chains tribute band, and guitarist Brady Side is a member of the Paige Woodbury Band.

They can each stand apart, but together they have created something that has caught the attention of fans and fellow musicians alike.

Fans of Throne of Vengeance, like Alessandra Priolo, a dedicated Vengeance fan who was out to take photos at their Oct. 29 performance at the Palomino, said that it’s their high energy live show that keeps fans coming back to see the group again.

“What keeps me coming back to see their shows is the high energy drumming, killer guitar riffs and unique vocal style,” Priolo said over Facebook, “they are a great bunch of talented guys, heavily involved in the music scene and a pleasure to watch each and every time.”

Riding on the waves of their recent success, Throne of Vengeance has made big plans for the future, including a cross-Canada tour and the promises of a new album.

Drummer Trevor Cobb says that the new album is shaping up to be a change of sound for the group.

“We’re trying something new with this one, it’s more refined, but at the same time really thrashy. It’s going to be more like anthem thrash punk than traditional heavy metal!”
Twelve years ago, Calgary native Andrew Killam was living the type of lifestyle that he and his friends had always dreamed of. He and his best friend had just moved into an apartment together and the two of them were beginning to establish themselves as credible artists in the Calgary rap scene.

Killam’s Mayfair Place apartment on the corner of Elbow Drive S.W. and Glenmore Trail S.W. quickly became the central hub for local artists to hang out, work on their lyrics, and most importantly, to party and to drink their hearts’ content.

But the partying and drinking never stopped for Killam. Drinking became a way of life and the unadulterated thrills and debauchery that accompanied it was something Killam grew very fond of. He developed a taste for the combination of vodka, 7UP and cranberry juice – so much so that for the next 10 years, not a day went by for Killam without its numbing, sugary companionship.

“I was drinking a two-six of vodka every single night. Our apartment became the place to go for people to come and get hammered,” Killam said. “It was a joke for me at the time to be an alcoholic. It was something I was almost pervasively proud of.”

Before long, Killam’s rap career had all but fizzled out. Whereas he had once been driven to write lyrics, record songs and perform live rap sets throughout Calgary, his need to drink and party eventually superseded it all.

“In a way us quitting music was tied to the drinking,” Killam recalled, now 35-years-old. “Everything became about getting drunk and next thing you know I’d be too drunk to even look at the paper.”

If the allures of the party lifestyle he faced at home weren’t enough to fully enthrall him into alcoholism, Killam’s various part-time jobs over the last decade as a waiter at nearby Macleod Trail restaurants closed the deal.

“The restaurant industry destroyed me,” Killam explained. “Every night of the week, people who closed the restaurant hung out after their shift and just got slaughtered.

“That kind of kick-started me down that path and I got to the point where I was drinking before and after work.”

In 2006, in an effort to escape the party scene of his apartment, Killam moved out on his own. Unfortunately, his addiction went along with him and instead of finding improvement, Killam saw his life get drastically worse.

“My situation turned out to be worse because when I lived with friends I was drinking with friends but when I lived by myself I was drinking alone,” Killam reflected. “My friends would ask me to hang out and I would make excuses to come home and drink.”

“I’d still go out with my friends but it was once a week. The other six nights they would ask me to hang out and I’d tell them I was tired or not feeling up to it. And I’d just go home and drink a two-six.”

And while Killam’s daily drinking was starting to affect his social life, it also began to affect his pocketbook.

Killam needed to earn at least $60 per shift in order to fund the drinks he’d have after work. He spent a minimum of $150 per week on alcohol to replenish his liquor cabinet. Any additional savings he might have held on to dissipated amidst blurred nights of insobriety.
“I spent nearly every dime I had on booze,” Killam said. “I was making restaurant money and saving none of it. By the end I probably spent about $200,000 on alcohol.”

The end Killam refers to came in the form of a serious illness on July 4th, 2011. He was 31.

Despite his efforts to conceal his sickness, Killam arrived for his 4:30 p.m. shift at The Keg Steakhouse & Bar looking visibly jaundiced and thin. Fortunately for Killam, his friend and manager Kristin Faubert was working that evening and upon taking one look at him, instructed another staff member to take him directly to the hospital.

Faubert said that seeing him that sick was the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back for her. She knew he had been heading down a dark path and seeing him in that state was something she could not remain idle about any longer.

“Before he got sick, I witnessed a slow but steady regression. Not only in his exterior but in his will;” Faubert said. “He didn’t care about much and he certainly didn’t care about others and how it affected them.”

But in that moment Killam did care enough about Faubert’s feelings to make the drive to the hospital. And he cared enough about his coworker to at least pretend to agree to seek help and walk through those hospital doors. But as his escort drove away, Killam walked out of the hospital, lit a cigarette, and made his escape to the nearest bus stop.

“My only thought was, ‘If I go in there and something is seriously wrong with me, I’m scared that they’re going to see the shape I’m in.’”

“They’re going to see that every day I made sure my stomach was empty so I could put more booze in it.”

But as the sparks from his discarded cigarette splashed over the pavement, Killam had a moment of clarity.

“I was so close to going home and I remember at the end of the cigarette I just told myself, ‘Just go in right now Andrew. You don’t feel right. Life is messed up. You should go in.’ So I went in,” Killam recalled.

And for the first time in a very long time, Killam sought help.

After checking in, Killam was immediately hooked up to an IV and given straight shots of potassium to combat his dangerous deficiency. Afterward, another staff member instructed another staff member to take him to at least pretend to agree to seek help and walk through those hospital doors. But as his escort drove away, Killam walked out of the hospital, lit a cigarette, and made his escape to the nearest bus stop.

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After checking in, Killam was immediately hooked up to an IV and given straight shots of potassium to combat his dangerous deficiency. Shortly thereafter he received the news he was dreading to hear.

“The doctor told me my liver had failed and that if I had one more drink I would have gone into complete liver shutdown,” Killam said. “He told me that if I had one more drink I could have died. All of a sudden a switch went off and I knew I had to stop or I was actually going to die.”

When Killam finally got home that evening, close to 11 p.m., he did what he usually did – he went straight for his vodka. But what he did with it next was something he never thought he would be able to do.

“It sounds like a cliché but the minute I got home I grabbed my two-six of vodka and I poured it down the sink,” Killam said. “I couldn’t even have it in my house because I knew if I had it I would take a drink.”

“I knew I was addicted. I switched gears immediately. I thought that if I’m not going to drink I’m going to put all of that energy into getting healthy.”

Thanks to a strong blend of support mixed with sheer willpower, Killam has been sober for over three years now and is as healthy as he’s ever been. His transformation has been evident to everyone around him - not only in his physical condition, but the way he carries himself – an apartment blooming with adornment, a dresser robust with new clothes, a swagger in his step.

“He’s more well rounded now. He’s uplifting. He cares,” Faubert said. “It’s like two completely different people. He has a new lease on life.”

Killam’s close friend, Tyler Arishenkoff, who witnessed the steady decline and subsequent revival, echoes Faubert’s sentiment.

“He’s changed a lot. He’s really starting to get his life together, taking care of himself and eating healthier,” Arishenkoff said. “He is a happier person. He has goals in his life that he wants to accomplish now that he’s not focused on getting wasted all the time.”

Killam is now hopeful that his battle with alcoholism will be an example for others – especially his friends – who struggle with alcohol addiction. He even hopes to one day have a drink or two again.

“My plan is to drink eventually but I won’t drink until I’m ready and I know I’m in control,” Killam explained. “I’d like to get to the point where I can have one or two drinks and then stop.”

Arishenkoff believes that Killam will succeed and that his lack of self-control and overindulgence are things of the past.

“If he does drink again I don’t think it will be a problem. I don’t think he’s the person he used to be,” Arishenkoff said. “It’s all a matter of whether the time is right and if he’s ready.”

Faubert regards this plan with cautious optimism.

“If he’s in a place in his life where he thinks he can control it, I can’t fault him for that,” said Faubert. “If he gets that clearance, all the power to him.”

And while Killam states that a recent clean bill of health from his doctor has given him the physical clearance to drink again, he is waiting for his own personal prognosis.

“I’d like to be able to have nights like my birthday or New Years Eve where I can drink with friends,” said Killam. “I want to appreciate alcohol instead of abuse alcohol like I used to.”

PHOTO BY DANIEL BALL/CALGARY JOURNAL

Killam’s Mayfair Place apartment was a central hub for he and his friends to rap, drink and have a good time. Taken nearly three months prior to his liver failure.

PHOTO BY DANIEL BALL/CALGARY JOURNAL

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Fashion: a word synonymous with designer labels, Anna Wintour and cultural hubs such as Paris, Milan and New York. The Canadian fashion industry is usually not the first thought to come to mind. Not to say that us Canadians aren’t fashionable. Canada boasts a wealth of trendy retailers offered at a variety of price points, including Joe Fresh, Zara and Holt Renfrew. However, much of the clothing sold in the Great White North was designed and manufactured elsewhere.

Bearing that in mind, for local designers within the Canadian industry, finding a successful niche can be a challenge. A challenge – but not an impossibility, as some Canadian designers have discovered through their own unique approaches to breaking into our country’s apparel industry.

**CAMP BRAND GOODS**

Connor Gould began this Calgary based outdoor-wear brand in 2011. The company was developed initially as a creative outlet for Gould who was working for a Calgary marketing firm at the time. Camp was inspired out of a love of graphic design, Gould’s passion for the Canadian outdoors and vintage mountaineer culture. Gould was joined by his now-wife Leslie McNeilly, also a passionate outdoorswoman, who handles the company’s social media and accounts. Two years ago, the couple became business partners. Gould said that a year into the company, the collection’s “Happy Camper Sweater” started gaining popularity on a variety of Canadian fashion blogs.

“We had the realization it was a bigger thing,” Gould said, adding that he wanted to avoid being a one-hit-wonder with his designs.

So, the couple decided to diversify the brand. “We have put a lot of time and effort into creating the brand into what it is today,” Gould said.

“It was always outdoor driven, but at first we didn’t look at it like it does today,” Gould added. Gould and McNeilly still do not have a structured business plan for the company, which they believe allows the collection to develop organically. “Loosely we follow a bigger goal followed by a bunch of smaller goals,” said Gould.

Last holiday season Camp Brand Goods was picked up by a derivative company of the Urban Outfitters umbrella, Without Walls. Without Walls is an American retailer that focuses on trendy outdoor-wear. Camp is additionally available locally in boutiques such as The Uncommons and Modern Menswear.

The company also celebrated the soft-launch of its first flagship store The Livery Shop with fellow local companies CoutuKitsch and Little Lion Man Leather last month.

Staying Calgary-based, Gould believes, is a double-edged sword. “If you’re in places like New York, Toronto or Vancouver you are much closer to the action, but you’re in a much bigger pond. There is a huge entrepreneurial spirit here and people like to support local.”

The company is mostly manufactured in Los Angeles, although a few items are produced offshore in countries like the Dominican Republic and Egypt. Gould said that North American manufacturing may be more expensive, but it offers a higher level of control. “It is easier when it is that much closer, especially for a smaller company like ours.”

**LAURA SIEGEL**

Laura Siegel is a women’s wear brand focused on manufacturing ethical and sustainable clothing that brings global craft culture to the western world.

Calgary native Carmen Tsang, who works as the director of sales and marketing at Laura Siegel in Toronto, said the brand started about three and a half years ago after designer Laura Siegel graduated from Parsons The New School of Design and travelled to Southeast Asia.

Originally from Toronto, Siegel was inspired by the craft culture she saw in her travels. Realizing there was a market that wasn’t being utilized by other fashion houses, she began researching...
Carmen Tsang said that bringing craft culture to the western world is one of the core values of the company.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF INDUSTRIA SUPERSTUDIO

how she could incorporate craft culture into her designs.  
“Now it is our goal every season to work with a new community of artisans,” Tsang said. “That’s what keeps us going.”  
Partnering with non-governmental organizations like Qasab Craft, the company works with artisans in India, South America and Africa. The company is also expanding to work with artisans in Bali and Lao.  
“Our model is different than a typical designer’s,” Tsang said. “We are driven by cultural craft, so I think the story drives our success.” She added that there is a movement with people wanting to know where their clothes are made and to feel connected to what they wear.

Before purchasing a Laura Siegel garment, it may have already travelled to three different countries and passed through the hands of three different craft artists prior to being assembled and shipped from Deli, India.  
“It’s sad,” said Tsang. “Sometimes you see these crafts practiced by the grandparents and it is not passed down because there is no need for it or there is technology that takes it over.”  
“That is part of why we do what we do, to make sure that culture is still relevant and still sustained in our world,” Tsang said.  
While the brand started in New York, Tsang said that upon moving to Toronto she’s found the community is more supportive.  
“It is easier for us to build up our credibility and strengthen our brand in a small pond like Toronto and then have that credibility and confidence to show in New York,” Tsang said.  
However, Tsang added that a key aspect of the New York fashion industry, which lacks in Canada, is that New York has the ability to make things happen.  
“The impossible can be possible, whereas in Toronto and even more so in Calgary you do not have those resources,”  
In Calgary, Laura Siegel is available in Primitive Culture and Holt Renfrew. Additionally, with support from the Toronto film industry, the company also produced their documentary, “Traceable.” The film critically examines the world of fast-fashion and will be showing on MTV in April for the second anniversary of the Rana Plaza factory collapse.

SARAH STEVENSON

While studying in Milan, Toronto-designer Sarah Stevenson received her master’s degree in textile and clothing design in 2010. It was during her studies that she realized the textile printing and manipulation techniques she was learning were not being utilized in the Canadian industry. Stevenson took the opportunity to create a market for her line by bringing these techniques back home to Toronto.  
After winning the Toronto Fashion Incubator New Labels competition in 2013, she received a $25,000 grant from actress Suzanne Rogers as well as the opportunity to develop a capsule collection with Target for spring 2014.  
Stevenson said that she worked very closely with the design team at Target to create a line suited for the chain’s shopper.  
“All of the fabrics were developed from my own artwork, which was really important for me because that is what my brand is all about,” Stevenson said. “We developed the fabrics and the colour story first and then the silhouettes.”  
Stevenson said that while all her fabrics are printed in Italy, her collection is manufactured in Canada.  
“I chose to keep manufacturing here so that I can work closely with the vendors to ensure excellent quality,” Stevenson added that through having her line manufactured in Canada she also ensures that the production process is ethical.  
However, Stevenson said that she feels it can be difficult to start and grow a brand in Canada because local designers do not receive a lot of support from the government and Canadian retailers.

“In other countries there is a lot of support for their local designers and they are very proud to invest in them,” Stevenson said.  
She added that in other countries retailers specifically buy local products. “Whereas here they are not very interested in local talent. It’s sad and it’s very difficult to stay in business here.”

Sarah Stevenson’s prints are developed in Italy and her manufacturing is done in Canada. Stevenson says that she chooses to manufacture in Canada because it affords her greater control over the production process. While she is no longer designing for Target, her designs are available at www.sarahstevensondesign.com.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF RENATA KAVEH
Delivering on and off the field

Offering elite training for a variety of sports, the National Sports School also has a strong academic reputation after a year of high diploma marks

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T he National Sports School focuses on training athletes, but government records show that they have some of the highest grades in the city, partly due to what a school official described as distance learning technologies and flexible schedules. But a connection between athletics and good grades may also play a role.

Established in 1994, National Sport School focuses on giving young athletes the flexibility to continue their intensive athletic training and competitions while completing high school.

But, according to Alberta Education, the sport school’s students had the second highest average diploma test score in Biology 30 with 77.5 per cent, sitting only behind Sir Winston Churchill. Along with that second place finish, they also tied for the third highest in English 30-1, coming in at 77.5 per cent, and had the highest Social Studies 30-2 score in Calgary, with an average of 82.9 per cent.

Some of their other grades weren’t as standout. However, the students also excelled in Mathematics 30-1 and Physics 30, ranking eighth and tenth in the city.

Principal Ken Weipert says students were able to achieve those test scores and still compete athletically because of the distant learning technologies the school uses, allowing them constant access to information wherever they are in the world.

“It provides opportunity for students to continue their learning when they’re out and about traveling the world for competitions or training,” Weipert says. “The opportunity to access all of the curriculum is still there.”

The students have the added opportunity to have a face-to-face connection with their teacher, which differs from an online course.

Irene Shkolnikov, who has been a student at the sport school since the 9th grade, has experienced that firsthand.

“My chemistry course is completely self directed,” says Shkolnikov, a high jumper who trains with Alberta Ballet on the side. “You go online and there is the whole check list that you have to complete, and the teacher is in class and is there if you ever need any help.”

In addition to the distance learning technologies, the sport school offers flexible schedules for their students.

Depending on the day, Shkolnikov starts her training in the morning before her classes.

Classes at the school are from 8:30am to 2:30pm, however, Shkolnikov says the teachers at the school are willing to accommodate their students’ sports schedules, which proves to be very helpful.

“If I train in the morning, I might be a little late to first period,” Shkolnikov says. “That’s okay because they’re accommodating to that.”

Shkolnikov attempted to train in California when she wasn’t a student at the sport school, and struggled to catch up with the course load.

“I basically failed all my courses and had to catch up, it’s just the reality of that, and this is what NSS is about,” Shkolnikov says.

Kyle Shewfelt, a three time Olympian and former student at the sport school had a similar experience as Shkolnikov when he was a student.

“It allowed for a flexible schedule where I could put most of my focus on chasing my sporting goals, but still excel in school, says the 32-year-old gymnast who attended the school in 1998.

But Weipert says there’s also a “definite relationship between focus and commitment in sport and focus and commitment in school.”

Weipert’s statement has been backed up by multiple studies on the connection between academics and physical activity. For example, a 2013 study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine found 60 minutes of physical activity could increase their grade from a C to a B.

Dolly Lambdin, a clinical professor in the Department of Kinesiology & Health Education at the University of Texas at Austin confirms the link between such activity and academic achievement.

 “[Physical activity] is helpful in terms of academic performance,” says Lambdin who is also the president of SHAPE America. “Physical activity helps stimulate the development of blood vessels to the brain which brings better blood to the brain so it works better. It releases neurotransmitters which helps the brain cells develop.”

But even though physical activity is a strong contributor to a student’s grade, students say they wouldn’t have been successful without the techniques the school uses to ensure their academic success.

Weipert says that they have achieved success by communicating with their students on a personal level.

“Each school - the culture, the community, as well as the level of support from the parents and staff varies… but by providing an opportunity to get to know their students on a personal and academic level [the National Sports School] lets them meet the needs of the students.”

Indeed, according to Shkolnikov, “The school motto is Culture of Excellence and you try to embrace that in everything you do.”
Athlete of the month: Colton Hunchak

Calgary’s top high school football prospect set to make big decision after outstanding career at Notre Dame

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In the near future, many elite Canadian high school student-athletes will be faced with one of the toughest and most important decisions of their young lives – signing a Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) Letter of Intent. Colton Hunchak of the Notre Dame Pride is one player that universities across Canada will be waiting in anticipation to hear from. The 6-1, 180-pound Calgary-born quarterback is being touted by many football scouts as the No. 1 high school prospect in Alberta. His multifarious myriad of achievements include two Midget Football Association Tier 1 championships with the Calgary Mavericks, a Top 10 individual ranking by Canada Football Chat, and two undefeated seasons at the helm of Notre Dame that both culminated in Provincial Championship victories.

In Hunchak’s ascension to Division 1 dominance, he’s had to overcome many obstacles. But the one that seems to have the biggest impact on his team is his evolution into a great leader. “I really wanted to grow as a leader because in the past I’ve been more of a ‘lead by example’ type of guy,” Hunchak said. “But this past year in the offseason and during the season I’ve wanted to be more of a vocal leader. We had sessions on how to do that with coach Diluzio and the other captains.”

Earning Praise from His Coach

Head coach Dave Diluzio is the mastermind behind Notre Dame’s awe-inspiring 32-game winning streak that stretches back to 2011. Yet Diluzio maintains that the achievement belongs to Hunchak and the rest of the players. “Our program is very player-centered, so kids have a lot of responsibilities in terms of leadership,” Diluzio said. “Colton did an outstanding job of making sure our team was going in the right direction. “We were in some tough situations. We were down in some games and we needed a fourth quarter comeback in one game and he really displayed a lot of poise and confidence in those situations,” Diluzio added.

And that confidence has spread to his teammates. “You can always trust him. I trust his football skills and his football awareness,” Notre Dame co-captain, Jon Girma said of his quarterback, Hunchak. “Every time he gives me the ball I trust that he’s making the right decision. And even if he does make a mistake, I know it’s not one that he’ll keep in his head.”

With a grocery list of personal and team-based accolades, one would likely forgive the young athlete for developing an increased sense of haughtiness. Fortunately for his teammates this hasn’t been the case with Hunchak. “A lot of players that have that kind of skill would really want to have all the focus on them,” wide receiver, Girma said. “But to see him have those kind of football skills and not allow it to get to his head kind of humbles you. That’s the kind of thing you can look up to.”

The cohesiveness and camaraderie present between Hunchak and his teammates is evident in every game. The culture at Notre Dame is built on hard work, accountability and a collaborative quest for excellence. In Hunchak’s three years with the team, he has not only embraced these values, he has begun passing them on to the next generation. “Every time he gives me the ball I trust that he’s making the right decision. And even if he does make a mistake, I know it’s not one that he’ll keep in his head.”

THE NEXT STEP

“In high school, Colton was so much faster and agile than a lot of the guys he was playing,” coach Diluzio said. “At the next level it’s not going to be that way. There are going to be guys who are just as fast as him or faster.”

“But his off-field preparation – to know where he needs to be, to know what his assignments are – is really what is going to set him apart,” Diluzio continued. “I envision him having an outstanding CIS career.”

Despite an onslaught of recruitment from schools across Canada and the United States – including San Diego State, who have over a dozen alumni currently playing in the NFL – Hunchak has narrowed his prospective future schools down to four: the University of Calgary, the University of Alberta, Carleton University, and York University.

Hunchak’s primary concern is finding a school with a culture similar to that of the Notre Dame Pride. “I want to go where I can make the most impact and where I feel most comfortable at,” Hunchak explained. “Playing here, it’s such a family. I want to be at a school where that kind of culture exists.”

While the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta have recruited him as a quarterback, York and Carleton are interested in his abilities as a wide receiver. With a speedy 4.4 40-yard dash time and excellent dexterity, Hunchak excels in aspects from both positions, so it’s not going to be the determining factor in where his Letter of Intent will end up.

“Wherever I can get on the field and the fastest I can make an impact for the team is where I will play. I’m down to those four schools and I’ll make my decision but I’m definitely not going to sign early,” Hunchak said. “I’m probably going to wait till February or March. I’m going to really take my time because it’s the next five years of my life.”

Micah Teitz, left, Colton Hunchak, middle, and Brett Hunchak, right, representing Team Canada at the International Bowl. Photo courtesy of Colton Hunchak.

Colton Hunchak is ready for the next stage of his football career. His athletic prowess has attracted university scouts across the country. Photo courtesy of Colton Hunchak.
An abrupt turn through a gated entryway leads to a silent sanctuary just steps away from the hustle and bustle Elbow Drive S.W. There, nestled between century-old trees, lies a picturesque family home for three.

Though the property offers countless amenities including a state-of-the-art wine cellar, a three-story library and a home-gym, the home's enviable backyard served as the selling point for Calgary businessman Derek Stimson and his wife, Stacey Kendall-Stimson, last summer.

The couple wasn't looking for a fixer-upper, but fortuitous timing led them to a property that allowed them to add personalized touches to their home in the heart of Calgary.

“We were looking for the neighborhood and that was the only option in the area,” said Kendall-Stimson. “It just happened to be on the high end.”

“But the walls were pink,” she laughed. Though the duo was ecstatic with the home's interior design, a recent paint job served as what seemed like a full-fledged renovation.

Bold metal tones and contemporary features have given the home a modern vibe, but Kendall-Stimson strategically added pillowy couches and soft lighting to keep the home from feeling cold.

“It is very warm and comfortable,” she noted. “It’s just a very cozy place and I love that.”

Living in a parents' basement is coined as a debacle for millennials everywhere, but for 20-year-old Ally Kendall a bedroom in the family's 5,041-square-foot home is just the opposite.

“When I saw this house for the first time, all I could think was this is my dream home,” echoed their daughter Ally Kendall, who will finish her event management diploma later this year.

“Eventually I want to move out of Calgary, but right now I’ve got it pretty good.”

—Haley Anderson
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The world needs something to counterbalance Kim Kardashian.