

EDMONTON HISTORIAN LAUREATE

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

MAY 2012 TO APRIL 2014

SHIRLEY LOWE

EDMONTON ANNIVERSARIES FOLLOWED BY THE MEDIA

In 2012-2014, Edmonton celebrated the centennial anniversaries of several projects and changes that added to the growth and significance of the city. It was a busy time for the Historian Laureate as these events were followed by media who conducted interviews to gain a historic perspective. Some of the stories included the amalgamation of the cities of Strathcona and Edmonton, the building and completion of the Alberta Legislature Building, the Alberta Hotel and the completion of the High Level Bridge. Many more important heritage buildings were completed or started in this time frame, a hundred years ago. Another story that caught the attention of media was the Church Street Project. The Historian Laureate was included in the plethora of interviews.

Media has caught on to the existence of a Historian Laureate and this relationship can only grow with future Historian Laureates.

NEW CONNECTIONS

An important role for the Historian Laureate was to make connections. As well as the established heritage community, there were new connections consisting of the African and aboriginal communities, new comers to Edmonton who were interested getting their stories told, community historians and businesses that specialized in documenting stories, the Federation of University Women, and Rotary. Questions about Edmonton and its history were fielded from other parts of the world through the City of Edmonton web site.

RESEARCH AND PRESENTATIONS

Requests to speak at functions, meetings, tours and classes resulted in presentations (some, but not all):

- The role of the Historian Laureate and the importance of history to the City of Edmonton was a topic choice for a Grant MacEwan University history class.
- ***Chinatown in Edmonton*** was presented during Free Admission Day at the City of Edmonton Archives.
- ***Canada's Largest Land Transfer: at Edmonton*** was a project for Fort Edmonton that extended to a presentation at the Edmonton and District Historical Society's lecture series. It was the topic for Free Admission Day in 2014. The Rotary Club of Edmonton Northeast requested the presentation for one of its meetings.

- The Museum of Human Civilization conducted outreach workshops throughout Canada and requested the Historian Laureate as a panelist in Edmonton.
- ***The Annie Jackson Story*** was requested by and delivered to the meeting of the Federation of University Women. Annie Jackson was Edmonton's first female police officer.
- ***Thirty Three City Parks and Seven Bridges*** was the subject matter for a four hour sold out city bus tour, researched and delivered for the Edmonton and District Historical Society.
- ***The River and Paul Kane*** was the topic for a presentation to the Edmonton Canoe Club.
- ***CBC Downtown Web Site Project*** requested information about several historic buildings and taped the interviews.
- ***Sixty Years: Edmonton and the Diamond Jubilee*** was a project by The Works that produced an exhibit and a web site (www.diamondjubileeproject.wordpress.com) about the visits to Edmonton by Queen Elizabeth II. Stories about Edmonton in four different eras were written by Shirley Lowe. These were added to the stories about the visits.

BOOK REVIEWS AND BOOK LAUNCH EVENTS

- **Appearances:**
 - ***Kisiskatchewan, The Great River Road:*** The story of the man who named Edmonton was a book launch for a new book about the life of William Tomison by Barbara Huck and Peter St. John, the Earl of Orkney. The event was a collaboration between the Historian Laureate, the City of Edmonton Archives, Fort Edmonton Park and the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance.
 - ***Building a Legacy: Edmonton's Architectural History*** by Ken Tingley and Lawrence Herzog was launched by the City of Edmonton. The Historian Laureate was asked to say a few words.
- **Reviews:**
 - *Condemned to Repeat* is an Edmonton based mystery novel that has a review by the Historian Laureate.
 - *Just Getting Started* by Todd Babiak is the story of the Edmonton Public Library. A review was requested and is on the EPL web site.

ADVOCACY

- The Rossdale Power Plant is an important piece of Edmonton's history. The Historian Laureate became part of the Rossdale Regeneration Group as a part of a personal interest in saving the remnants of Edmonton's architectural history.
- Heritage homes became an issue with the loss of Arthur Davies' home in Old Strathcona. A group, spearheaded by the Edmonton Heritage Council and includes the 2012-14 Historian Laureate, has been formed to work on possible solutions for future heritage home challenges.

THE VALUES OF A HISTORIAN LAUREATE

An evaluation by Communities in Bloom that gave Edmonton 5 Blooms, recommended the following:

“The relationship with the city and Shirley Lowe, Historian Laureate is an important component in the identification of new Heritage opportunities and this position should be supported.

Perhaps the Winter City strategy could include a Heritage component to celebrate Edmonton's winter past.”