

JUNE 2022

# YESS NEWSLETTER

## MESSAGE FROM MARGO



June is an incredible month here in Edmonton for so many reasons: Summer Solstice and outside activities, Pride Month, Indigenous History Month and Indigenous Peoples Day, and so much more. The theme of this month's Newsletter is belonging. We at YESS are so excited to be outside and enjoy some sunshine, socializing, and movement and we are also very grateful for the ability to connect with our friends, family and community. Connecting and building

healthy relationships is at the core of what YESS focuses on and it is what fills our hearts in the darkest of times. We feel strength when we feel like we belong, but so many youth who come through our doors have lost or may have never had that feeling in their family or community. This month's issue features an article by Tessa Mulcair, Manager of Shelters, on the importance of celebrating Pride at YESS and an article by Shantell Martineau, Programming Coordinator, on Indigenous History Month.

Enjoy the sun,

Margo

## YESS CELEBRATES PRIDE MONTH

By Tessa Mulcair, Manager of Shelters



This month we held a youth Pride event with some of our community partners. We won't lie, we've been missing the Pride parade around here.

The majority of our youth are 2SLGBTQ+ and many have faced isolation and rejection from their families for it. The Pride parade was a time where we could not only celebrate our youth, but also surround them with thousands of people flying rainbows and letting them physically see that they belong in the community.

While there was no parade this year, there was a block-style festival held at Grindstone Theater. These types of events, though they are inclusive and accessible in nature, can be intimidating for people who are not quite sure where they belong in society. When you hear "You're not a paying customer, go away" the other 364 days a year, it can be hard to suddenly trust that if you sit down to watch a free drag show or concert you won't be shooed away. So, we created an event just for marginalized youth to kick off the festival

and set them up to know that they belong at Pride too.

Together with CHEW, OSYS, and iHuman we created a space where youth could get their rainbow on – literally, with a Pride swag station. They could get decked out in free rainbow gear and glitter, or simply grab a flag, either way the goal was to make sure they would fit right in at the festival. We had Fox Burger swing by with their food truck and generously provide an amazing meal, so they would not feel left out if they could not afford the festival food options. Kind Ice Cream provided us with their rainbow "Gay OK" ice cream, of course it was a big hit too. Youth could create their own patches and buttons on the spot so that they could reflect their identity exactly how they wanted to. We had a selfie station where they could get an instant-print picture with friends or our fabulous guest drag queen, Karmic the Kween. We also had guest appearances by local queer icons MLA Janis Irwin and MP Randy Boissonnault. And finally, we held a "reverse parade", making signs and waving our flags on Gateway Blvd to celebrate with those driving by our little event, pulling in a

hint of that community support we know is so strong.

We'd like to give a huge thank you to all those that worked to pull this event together, our youth felt the love and support.



# YESS CELEBRATES INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S MONTH

By Shantell Martineau, Programming Coordinator



## Can you tell us about the Ceremony you just went on with the youth?

Yess was invited to bring Youth to the land for 6 days of Ceremony. It was a Fasting Ceremony. There was an opportunity to be of service and help. Helping roles looked like dishwashing, cooking the feast, chopping wood, set-up/take-down, and supporting the lodge helpers. The roles to fill provided access to knowledge, companionship, leadership, and growth opportunities for both the Youth and Staff. Entering the lodges, singing the songs, feeling the drums and rattles, feasting together, and hearing the teachings of the Ceremony were all accessible for Youth. Seeing Youth connect with Elder, be inquisitive, receive helper protocol, explore the land, and support each other along this journey was a gift. Learning along the way that Ceremony can be explored. Not everyone is ready to enter the lodge, but maybe sitting around the lodge and hearing the singing and prayers and teachings is enough. I personally learnt that meeting the needs and readiness is enough.

## What do you wish more people knew for Indigenous Peoples Month?

I wish more people knew about the sacred connection Indigenous Peoples have with Mother Earth, with Creator, with Spirit, and with all Creation. Connection to ancestral lineage that gives strength



and resiliency. I wish more people could see us as we see them, our relations, our brothers, our sisters, our equals. I wish more people could witness the natural learning we enter while we connect on the land. We gather with the land, we pray with the land, we celebrate and hold Ceremony for the land. I wish more people could understand and respect this truth. I wish more helpers step forward and support Indigenous Peoples right to advocate and to create spaces for this connection to grow stronger. I wish this help could be witnessed and felt every day of the year but starting with a Month is still a good way to grow.

# YESS SUMMER RAFFLE!

Support YESS and enter a chance to win some incredible prizes!

Maybe take that trip you have been putting off? Or renovate your backyard to have the barbecue and hot tub of your dreams? Maybe go on a wild no holding back shopping spree?

Draw on July 29, 2022.

## Big Bag of Money (\$20,000)

There's nothing Edmontonians' love more than a good 50/50 raffle, but what about a Big Bag of Money with a **1 in 400 chance** of winning!? The raffle will run until July 29, with tickets valued at \$250 and the jackpot is a gigantic \$20,000!

Tickets can be purchased by individuals 18 years or older, located within Alberta's provincial borders at the time of purchase. All ticket sales are final, and ticket buyers will receive a receipt, and their raffle ticket(s) via email after purchasing.

AGLC Raffle License #596629

## PURCHASE TICKETS AT:

<https://yess.org/yess-summer-raffle-2022>

## Or enter our summer raffle for the Kananaskis Nordic Spa

It's been a trying few years and we bet you deserve a vacation! Enter in for a **\$5000 gift certificate for the Kananaskis Nordic Spa**, and spend some time away from your work in this gorgeous alpine sanctuary. Entry is just \$100 and the gift certificate gets you access to the spa, pools, restaurant and their feature hotel!

Tickets can be purchased by individuals 18 years or older, located within Alberta's provincial borders at the time of purchase. All ticket sales are final, and ticket buyers will receive a receipt, and their raffle ticket(s) via email after purchasing.

AGLC Raffle License #600913



Illustrations by Jonathan Busch

