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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Albert Public Library wins prestigious provincial award

ST. ALBERT —St. Albert Public Library is thrilled to announce the City of St. Albert Library Board has won the Minister’s Award for Municipal and Public Library Excellence for its Community Tea and Bannock initiative. The Library is one of two recipients in Alberta to receive the award in 2024 in the Public Services category for library boards serving a population over 10,000.

The award was announced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Honourable Ric McIver, in a letter to the board. “Congratulations on this achievement and recognition by your peers,” writes Minister McIver. “I commend you on your efforts to bring people together, facilitate conversations, and support all community members in their Truth and Reconciliation journeys.”

Community Tea and Bannock is a monthly drop-in gathering inviting all community members, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to come together and connect over tea and bannock. The purposefully informal series creates easy opportunities for people to come together, make new friends, and share stories over traditional Indigenous refreshments in a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere. It takes place in the inviting, open spaces of the Library’s Community Living Room and is hosted by the Library in partnership with the St. Albert-Sturgeon County Métis Local 1904’s Red Willow Program.

“It’s almost like inviting someone into your home for tea and bannock,” says Phyllis Kelly, Community Engagement Committee Lead, St. Albert-Sturgeon Country Métis Local 1904. “Having a more comfortable space where you can spread out and people are feeling welcome to join ... I think made the Public Library a really good place and a good fit for this.”

“I think it’s really been important to help people understand the Métis history of St. Albert,” says Kelly. “They might move here and not really be aware of the founding of St. Albert, but also the fact that Métis families have lived in this area for generations.”

Located in the iconic architectural jewel of St. Albert Place, designed by Indigenous architect Douglas Cardinal, the Downtown Library has been a community gathering place since 1983.

“The idea for Community Tea and Bannock has really been in the making for a long time,” says Stephanie Foremsky, Community Engagement Manager at St. Albert Public Library. “St. Albert’s river valley is known as Payhonin, a Nehiyaw word for “gathering place.” With the Downtown Library located at the heart of that riverside gathering place, we wanted to build on the Library’s history as a community gathering place.”

Community Tea and Bannock, which began in January 2024, takes place the last Tuesday of each month from 10:30-11:30am in the Downtown Library’s Community Living Room space on the main floor. The

renovations to the Downtown Library, including the creation of the Community Living Room, happened with the support of the Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF) of the Government of Canada in 2023.

“Every month different people show up,” says Amanda Patrick, former Red Willow Program coordinator. “And you also get the same people that come, so you get to see them again. It’s more than connection, you’re also building friendships. It really is just building a community.”

“And we can all be one,” says Lynn Martin, Director, St. Albert-Sturgeon Metis Local 1904, “And not just separate. They know us, and we know them. And that’s really important.”

“We are all St. Albertans in the end,” adds Kelly.

“The Library is ‘Here for you. Here for all,’ says Peter Bailey, CEO of St. Albert Public Library. “The community Tea and Bannock initiative was inspired by our strategic priority to Pursue Truth and Reconciliation, supporting all community members in their Truth and Reconciliation journeys and having Indigenous community members feel a sense of belonging at the Library,” says Bailey.

To build on the Minister’s Awards for Municipal and Public Library Excellence program’s objective to share municipal and public library success and knowledge, the Community Tea and Bannock initiative will be showcased across the province on the Government of Alberta’s website and social media platforms.

“Alberta’s municipalities and public library boards create, implement and manage many excellent initiatives and practices that make our communities strong, prosperous, and resilient,” says Minister McIver.

The Library previously won the Minister’s Award in 2016 for the Reading Buddies reading encouragement program, in 2013 for the STARFest literary festival and in 2015 for the ME Card service (with Metro Edmonton Federation of Libraries partners Strathcona County Library and Edmonton Public Library).

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Watch our video about Community Tea and Bannock here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJZgspMY5Ek>

More information about the 2024 award recipients is available here:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/ministers-awards-for-municipal-and-public-library-excellence>

<https://www.alberta.ca/ministers-awards-municipal-public-library-excellence>

High resolution photos and interviews are available upon request

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Photos:

SAPL Tea and Bannock – Phyllis and Lynn (Photo by Stephanie Cragg)

Left: Phyllis Kelly, Community Engagement Committee Lead, St Albert-Sturgeon Métis Local 1904

Right: Lynn Martin, Director, St Albert-Sturgeon Métis Local 1904.



SAPL- Tea and Bannock -Stephanie and Amanda wide - Creators of the Community Tea and Bannock program: Stephanie Foremsky, SAPL Community Engagement Manager, along with Amanda Patrick, Red Willow Program Coordinator (former), St Albert-Sturgeon Métis Local 1904.

