



MEDIA KIT

SEARCHING FOR IZENA

**CHRONICLES THE STORIES
OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP
AT EDMONTON CITY HALL**

Unique project commemorates
centennial of the first women being
elected to Edmonton City Council

2021 marks a major milestone for Edmonton.
It has been a century since the first woman –
Izena Ross – was elected to Edmonton City Council.

And, unfortunately, progress has zigged and zagged since then. In the past 100 years, only 30 women have followed in Izena's footsteps. And only one woman has ever reached the mayor's chair. The one and only time there was ever gender parity at Edmonton City Hall was 32 years ago and today, only two of Edmonton's 12 councillors are female.

Over the past century, our female political leaders have overcome many obstacles and been called every name in the book from silly to unwomanly to beastly. But nevertheless, they persisted, and helped change Edmonton forever.

The Searching for Izena Project aims to commemorate and chronicle how these 31 female trailblazers helped shape and build Alberta's capital city. Before now, many of these important stories have been lost to history or are wildly incomplete.

The project, which is being organized by YWCA Edmonton, Parity YEG, and, former and current Edmonton City Councillors, includes a monthly podcast: *Searching for Izena: 'Unwomanly' Stories of Female Leadership at Edmonton City Hall*. Co-hosted by Stacey Brotzel and Kim-Ann Wilson, it will be an unflinching, honest and colourful account of the past century and the role women played at Edmonton City Hall and will include interviews and accounts from several of the 13 surviving women councillors and notable Edmontonians, including Olivia Butti and Senator Paula Simons. The podcast will also feature people who have yet to reach city council — even in 2021 — including women of colour and Indigenous women. The year-long campaign is being supported by dozens of volunteers from across the capital region and generous grants from the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) and the Edmonton Heritage Council.

Find more about *Searching for Izena* at www.searchingforizena.com

Keep up to date on social media by following @ParityYEG



WHO IS IZENA?

On December 12, 1921, Izena made history by being elected Edmonton's first female councillor. Unfortunately, the story of the "housewife" turned "alderman" has largely been lost to history. There is very little online or at the Edmonton archives about Izena beyond a few news clippings, and only a small Edmonton park has been named in her honour. She served a one-year term before losing a re-election bid in 1922.

This project will honour Izena's legacy, the path she carved, and all the other women who helped shape our city from their seats at City Hall.

SEARCHING FOR IZENA: Featured Steering Committee Members, Surviving Council Members & Podcast Guests



Katherine O'Neill

Co-Chair, Searching for Izena

Katherine O'Neill joined the YWCA Edmonton as Chief Executive Officer in March 2020. She is a passionate advocate for the rights of women and girls and inspiring people to hear the important call of community service.

She has worked in leadership positions in communications and politics throughout her career. A writer by trade, she spent most of her journalism career working as a national correspondent with the Globe and Mail, dispatching stories from across Canada and even the dusty battlefields of Afghanistan in 2008.

After leaving journalism, Katherine led several organizations, including the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta and Alberta Together, a non-partisan, not-for-profit that conducted political research and worked to attract more young Albertans to enter politics. She has also run for public office and worked on political campaigns at all three levels of government.

Katherine holds a Bachelor of Arts from Wilfrid Laurier University and a Master of Journalism from Carleton University.

Follow her:  @katherineoneill  @katherineoneill



Rajah Maggay

CO-CHAIR, SEARCHING FOR IZENA

A Second Generation Filipino-Canadian, raised by a network of strong women, Rajah and her family have lived in their community for over 20 years.

Her experiences with civic engagement first started with the City of Edmonton Youth Council. Her passion for mental health advocacy led her to join the Health and Wellness committee where she assisted with multiple mental health initiatives and research in community-based solutions to youth issues. During her terms on Youth Council she spent time in various leadership positions including the Vice Chair of the Health and Wellness Committee and the Chair of the Engagement and Outreach Committee where she planned events, participated in panels and continued her strong advocacy for young voices.

Rajah currently serves on the board of ParityYEG as Vice Chair of Research and on her local community league as Communications Lead. In 2020 she also spent time as a Research and Policy Advisor for a local city councillor.

Rajah's other current projects include a support group for BIPOC women in politics, as campaign manager for a local female council candidate in the 2021 election and producing a podcast called Whats the Tsismis on Filipinx identity in Edmonton.

Follow her:  @RajahMaggay  @RajahMaggay



Olivia Butti

FORMER ALDERMAN (1974-1986) & OLDEST SURVIVING FEMALE COUNCILLOR

Mrs. Butti was born on February 17, 1938 in Musidora, Alberta. She attended school at Hairy Hill and Victoria Composite High Schools. She also took two years of Parliamentary Law training and was a graduate of the Dorothy Composite Public Speaking course. She has been an advertising Consultant with Lawson & Jones Ltd. and a banker with CIBC and Royal Bank. She was a director of the Edmonton Exhibition Association and the Klondike Association. She was also a member of the Development Appeal Board, Chamber of Commerce the Parks and Rec. Advisory Board. She is a member of the International Toastmasters Club. She was founder of the Rosslyn Community League. In 1978, she attempted to run for the PC nomination for Edmonton-Glengarry but was unsuccessful. After her time on City Council, she was involved in the project organizing a tribute to Wayne Gretzky after he was traded. She was a coordinator for the Edmonton Real Estate Board and Managing director of a Personnel Agency. She is married to Peter. They have a son and a daughter.



Bev Esslinger, Edmonton City Councillor Ward 2

EPISODE 1, GUEST

Bev is a mother, grandmother and a City Councillor. A strong champion of the women's initiative and advocate for the elimination of Gender Based Violence, she was first elected to City Council in 2013 and is now serving her second term. Bev wants to leave the city better and is working to build a more child friendly, safe and welcoming community for everyone. She loves to read, especially mysteries. Sometimes she gets to help people solve challenges and that includes demystifying city hall and helping people navigate the system.

Follow her:  @bevesslinger  @bevesslinger



Sarah Hamilton, Edmonton City Councillor Ward 5

EPISODE 1, GUEST

Sarah Hamilton is proud to be City Councillor for Edmonton's Ward 5. She currently sits on the Executive Committee and the Utility Committee, and serves as a council representative on both the Edmonton Police Commission and the River Valley Alliance. She is also an advisor on Council's Indigenous People's Strategy and the Arts, Heritage and Culture Initiative, and spearheaded the City's Design Initiative to enhance the function and aesthetics of city spaces and maximize the value and impact of its infrastructure investments.

Sarah grew up in west Edmonton and graduated from the University of Alberta. She went on to receive a Master of Arts Degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago before returning home to Edmonton.

Prior to becoming a city councillor, Sarah worked as an adjunct professor of media and communications, a freelance journalist, and the owner and operator of a communications and public relations firm working with several non-profit businesses throughout Edmonton. She has also held various public service-oriented roles in provincial and municipal government.

Sarah is passionate about Edmonton and its potential to grow, thrive and influence. She considers Edmonton one of the most forward-thinking cities in Canada – with some of the best prospects for continued and sustainable growth – and intends to continue to make that known.

Follow her:  @sarah_hamilton_yeg  @sjhamilton



Senator Paula Simons

EPISODE 2, GUEST

Paula Simons is an Independent Senator from Alberta, and a former long-time columnist with the Edmonton Journal. She's also a contributor to the popular history, Alberta: 100 Years a Home, and a writer and producer of a number of CBC IDEAS documentaries about prairie history. In 2008, she was honoured by the Edmonton Historical Board for her writing on Edmonton history and her championship of Edmonton heritage preservation.

Follow her:  @Paulatics



Lisa Holmes

EPISODE 2, GUEST

Lisa Holmes is an experienced executive leader and board member with a demonstrated history of working in the non-profit sector, communications, and government relations industries. She is the co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of Diplomat Consulting, a full-service public affairs and communications company based in Edmonton.

Prior to her work in the corporate sector, Lisa was elected as a Town Councillor and Mayor of Morinville, Alberta, where she served for 7 years. Lisa is the Past President of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and former Director of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. While at AUMA, Lisa chaired the President's Task Force on Status of Women and the Women in Municipal Government Committee and is currently an FCM Regional Champion for Women in Politics. She was named a Global Edmonton Woman of Vision, Avenue Magazine Top 40 under 40 and one of Alberta Venture Magazine's 50 most influential Albertans. She is passionate about connecting women with leadership opportunities and inspiring them to get involved in community decision-making, both in business and politics.

Follow her:  @lisaholmes22  @lisaholmes

PODCAST HOSTS



Stacey Brotzel

Stacey has been a staple on Edmonton televisions for decades. The award winning broadcaster has spent her career asking questions and trying to satisfy her constant curiosity. She has interviewed people like Keith Richards from the Rolling Stones, Alan Alda from M.A.S.H. and several Prime Ministers. But her heart is in Edmonton and truly loves to tell the stories of Edmontonians.

Over the years Stacey has put on Spanx and slipped into an evening gown more than a few times to M.C. hundreds of events. She has helped raise millions of dollars for local charities through her community work.

Stacey is a lover of chocolate and wine and is a proud mom of 2 spirited girls and one indifferent ginger cat.

Follow her:  @staceybrotzel  @staceybrotzel



Kim-Ann Wilson

Kim-Ann Wilson is a business owner, public speaker and podcaster, she was born in Kingston, Jamaica, and grew up in England. She has been recognized as 1 of 50 'Top to Top Future Woman Leader of Tomorrow' awarded by HSBC in 2011, and she has also received a commendation from the Department of Foreign Affairs International Trade (DFAIT) of Canada for developing a partnership program between Caribbean Universities and the Government of Canada.

Kim-Ann is the Owner/President of SASS Marketing Agency, a full-service marketing agency in Edmonton that helps entrepreneurs, business owners, and nonprofits to elevate their marketing efforts both online and offline, by creating beautiful, professional and eye-catching marketing materials, that brings astonishing brand exposure.

She is also the co-owner of Quick Fix Property Solutions Inc., a property management company, the co-owner of Eat Jamaican Inc., a Jamaican Food delivery service and the co-host of the podcast show "*Da Melanin Queenz*", a show for women that challenges our views on how we treat each other and motivates women to fix their crowns and highlight their royal beauty.

'Searching for Izena' is a project that resonates with Kim-Ann Wilson, historical events that include women and their contribution to society is often overlooked or down-played. The opportunity to shout about the works and quirks of 31 women Councillor is an honor. As a woman of color and a woman in leadership, she knows the importance of celebrating the accomplishments of other queens, it gives hope to the next generation and inspires the next 'Izena' to take action.

She loves traveling with her family, shopping, acting, and anything that makes her laugh.

Her favorite quote is: "If your opinion doesn't put food on my table, then it's irrelevant".

Website: www.sasavvysistah.com

Follow her:  @sasavvysista | @kim_ann_wilson | @damelaninqueenz

SEARCHING FOR IZENA: Summaries of first two episodes

Podcasts will be released on the third Tuesday of every month.



JANUARY: Part 1: Councillors #30 Bev Esslinger & #31 Sarah Hamilton

To start this political journey, let's begin right at the end. In 100 years, only 31 women have been elected to Edmonton City Council. In the first episode, you'll meet #30 (Bev Esslinger) and #31 (Sarah Hamilton) and learn about why they ran and their experiences at City Hall. You'll also hear from the Searching For Izena project co-chairs YWCA Edmonton CEO Katherine O'Neill and Parity YEG Vice-Chair Rajah Maggay. They will talk about the centennial and why gender parity and representation matters in 2021 more than ever.

Guests: Katherine O'Neill, Rajah Maggay, Bev Esslinger, Sarah Hamilton



FEBRUARY: Part 2: Councillors #1 Izena Ross & #2 Margaret Crang

Meet #1 (Izena Ross), the Edmonton woman who made history 100 years ago by capturing 364 votes and becoming the first woman elected to Edmonton City Council. In 1921, Edmonton was home to about 60,000 people and was recovering from the devastating effects of a world war and global pandemic. In this episode, you will also learn about Councillor #2, Margaret Crang, who was elected in 1934 at the age of 24.

Guests: Senator Paula Simons and Lisa Holmes

Listen to us wherever you find your podcasts



About YWCA Edmonton & Parity YEG



YWCA Edmonton has been a powerful voice for gender equity and social progress in the capital region since 1907. Part of an international movement, YWCA Edmonton is a trusted provider of services, programs and advocacy work that transforms lives and helps build a stronger, healthier, and equitable community for all. The organization employs close to 300 full-, part-time and seasonal staff annually.

YWCA Edmonton is the fiscal agent and one of the lead organizers for the Searching For Izena Project.

Website: www.ywcaofedmonton.org/



@YWCA_Edmonton



@YWCAEdmonton



/YWCAEdmonton



Parity YEG is dedicated to opening more doorways for women into politics. The Edmonton-based volunteer organization takes a multipartisan approach and exists to achieve gender parity at decision-making tables. They engage, encourage and work alongside women to help them run for office.

Website: www.parityyeg.ca/



@ParityYEG



@ParityYEG



/ParityYEG

Searching For Izena is powered largely by volunteers from across Edmonton. The steering committee is co-chaired by YWCA Edmonton CEO Katherine O'Neill and Parity YEG Vice-chair Rajah Maggay, and includes Edmonton Councillors Bev Esslinger, Sarah Hamilton and EPL CEO Pilar Martinez.