

THIS PROJECT WAS FUNDED BY

Living Local

Neighbourhood Arts and Heritage Program



Archiving the Present – Documenting the Past

During 2014, I collaborated with artist and photographer, Erika Luckert, and with community stakeholders to coordinate the recording and describing of Westmount's present stories and past history. The impetus behind the project was the pending celebration of Westglen School's seventy-fifth year as a learning institution in 2015. Additionally, Westmount School celebrated its one hundredth year in 2013.

Archiving the Present – Documenting the Past engaged local residents in a collaborative project that helped build a sense of belonging by identifying the place that the present and past has in the community's history. It contextualized personal and neighbourhood history in the larger histories of the Westmount community and the city as a whole. Furthermore, the project served to strengthen connections between the Westmount Community League and Westglen School by giving community members a sense of shared history.

The historical research component of the project explored, with a critical eye, archival information about the Westmount community. In recording Westmount's past, material contained in *Edmonton's West Side Story: The History of the Original West End of Edmonton from 1870*, written in 1991 by Lori Yanish and Shirley Lowe, and an *Historical Guide to Groat Estate, Westmount, Inglewood*, published in 1980, were incorporated. Other sources included photographs, maps, written material, official documents, media reports, and personal interviews with local residents and alumni of Westglen School.

Through this combined research and photography / storytelling project, local residents were provided with a unique opportunity to experience expressive arts and living research, and take ownership of a significant community-wide project. Local community members developed an appreciation of the creative process while simultaneously expanding and enhancing their understanding of different forms of creative expression. This project advanced the notion that creative expression is not just about revealing what is inside the artist and /or researcher, but that collective arts and historical research can be used to chronicle something larger than we could ever address as individuals. *Archiving the Present – Documenting the Past* facilitated community-wide efforts to promote, share, preserve and celebrate the history of Westmount. This has helped to foster a shared sense of local pride and has assisted in the creation of social capital that will strengthen the community as it continues to form its history.

I would like to thank those local residents who contributed to the project via their willingness to be interviewed. We are also grateful for the financial support of *Archiving the Present – Documenting the Past* that was provided by the Living Local Neighbourhood Arts and Heritage grant program of the Edmonton Heritage Council, Edmonton Arts Council, and Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues.

TIM BERRETT