



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.

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.

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 project, which is being organized by YWCA Edmonton, Parity YEG, and current and former 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.

www.searchingforizena.com

 @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 Campaign Highlights

- Nine-part, monthly podcast that begins in January 2021. Called Searching For Izena: 'Unwomanly' Stories of Female Leadership at Edmonton City Hall, a new episode will be released the third Monday of every month. Guests will include Senator Paula Simons, former Edmonton City Mayor Jan Reimer and several former and current Edmonton city councillors and candidates.
- Monthly speaker panels and virtual events organized by community groups and organizations, including Parity YEG, YWCA Edmonton and Edmonton Public Library
- Searching For Izena: 100th Anniversary Summit; a proposed in-person or virtual gathering scheduled for September 2021
- Social Media Campaign & Website
- Potential Scholarship and/or gift or commemorative book back to the City

SEARCHING FOR IZENA

Sponsorship Opportunities

SOLD
Gold Sponsor (\$10,000) - ~~One~~ Available

Silver Sponsor (\$5,000) - ~~Four~~ ^{Three} Available

- Recognize sponsor support in marketing and communications related to this initiative, including but not limited to: podcasts, video, website, social media, newsletters, emails, blogs and annual reports
- Recognize sponsor at virtual and in-person events, including remarks and logo
- Discuss additional profile ideas as plans develop

Bronze Sponsor (\$1,000) - Four Available

- Recognize sponsor support in marketing and communications related to this initiative, including but not limited to: podcasts, video, website, social media, newsletters, emails, blogs and annual reports

Reporting

YWCA Edmonton and Parity YEG agree to:

Provide the sponsor with a brief report after the initiative has concluded, confirming that the initiative occurred and how the sponsor funds were used. The report will also include basic metrics, including number of volunteers, earned media and social media hits

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 bipartisan 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

Contact

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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.

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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.

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