

# The Chronicle Journal

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## Christmas story is about value of redemption

**I**F THERE'S an antidote to this data-drenched age, one in which even baseball managers consult charts and tables as if they were NASA engineers, it is surely the Nativity story of Christmas.

Even now, the minor industry of Jesus scholars notwithstanding, details and certainty remain scarce about exactly what happened the night that delivered the most famous person in the world and changed the course of history.

What we know of the birth of Jesus Christ — celebrated again tonight by more than two billion Christians around the world — comes from the gospels of the New Testament, which recount the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary, her journey with Joseph to Bethlehem, the birth of their child in a stable, the star that lured the Magi, and their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Yet even in the gospels, we are presented with gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions. Only Matthew includes the Wise Men, only Luke the shepherds. For all the associated wonders, Christ's birth isn't even mentioned by Mark and John.

Modern scholars now largely agree that the actual year of Christ's birth is wrongly presented and that the trip to Bethlehem was literary licence required to place the nativity in the location foretold in Old Testament prophecies.

There were no contemporaneous accounts of Christ's birth. Just as we don't know for certain if, during his life, he personally claimed to be the Messiah, or if he intended to establish a religion.

The entire story, drawn from oral histories retained and related by mere mortals with imperfect memories and private agendas, wasn't even written down until half a century or more after Christ's death, and not taken as Christian canon for a further three centuries.

Yet for all that, for all the lack of definitive accounts, the story lives, perennially compelling and consoling, and irresistible for all the reasons any Hollywood yarn-spinner or grade-school Christmas pageant organizer would recognize.

There is the wonder of the angel and the marvel of the guiding star. There are the exotic silks and turbans of the Wise Men against the humble garb of the shepherds. There is the compelling imagery of cattle giving way to a young couple in dire need, who found no room at the inn.

More important than its captivating images and characters, more enduring than its tale-weaving craftsmanship, was the fact the Nativity story spoke to humanity's ineffable need and longing, our innate sense of right and just, our awareness, even unconsciously, of our own imperfection, our chronic selfishness and pride, our indifference or outright cruelty to our fellows.

Christ's birth, the story says, was specifically intended to redeem those failings. The drumbeat of his teachings taught us how.

He insisted we act counter to our baser instincts. That we put others ahead of ourselves. That we forgive the worst of transgressors. That we love those most difficult to love, who are usually those who need it most.

Much of human failure, he taught, was a failure of attention, a failure to recognize our own privilege and blessings. The personal responsibility he insisted on was the personal responsibility of the Golden Rule, of loving others as ourselves.

What keeps the Nativity story as fresh as morning is that there remains as much need of those teachings in the here and now — in this age of inequality, inhospitableness, this age of fear and loathing — as there was the night of that celebrated birth.

Two millennia on, Pope Francis said as much in tweeting that "Jesus knows well the pain of not being welcomed. May our hearts not be closed as were the houses of Bethlehem."

Year after year, generation after generation, the Nativity delivers lessons in the astonishing power of story, in the capacity of faith to trump ambiguity and contradiction, in the abiding appeal of goodness, humility, selflessness, generosity.

Every Christmas, the Nativity story suggests, brings the potential for redemption, for rebirth, and the opportunity to be better than we are and the people we wish to be.

— An editorial from the Toronto Star



## Businesses can lead the way to support diverse community

BY DONNA YOCOM

**T**HE DIVERSE cultural fabric of Thunder Bay is just one of the many reasons why its residents are proud to call this city home. Each thread of the fabric is a person leading an interesting life.

These people come from all different backgrounds, so it makes sense that business owners would want to fully understand and achieve diversity and inclusion to reach a wider audience.

At IG (Investors Group) Wealth Management, we know that attracting a loyal and diverse clientele requires genuine understanding and interest in Canadians, and we strive to ensure our workforce reflects the communities we serve. Here in Thunder Bay, our IG office is invested in many charitable initiatives. Together, my assistant Emey Hendricks and I work to bring our region to the next level. We don't follow the traditional role of administrative assistant. Instead, Emey is out there in the community on behalf of IG and inspiring others in the office.

We are actively engaged in the Together Project, whose goal is to welcome refugee newcomers to Canada. This year, IG worked with a Syrian family, providing them with mentor-



ONE CITY, MANY VOICES

**Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism and Respect Committee produces this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.**

ship, guidance, support and friendship as they navigate life in a new country. I am proud of the colleagues in my office who volunteered their time to assist them with many of the challenges faced by newcomers. By helping this Syrian family bridge a gap, we also built a strong foundation of mutual learning and understanding.

Some members of our office focus on increasing financial literacy in our province's remote communities because we know sound finances can lead to independence and empowerment. An added benefit is instilling the confidence our neighbours need to expand on their skill

sets and careers, knowing the community supports them.

In addition to volunteering outside our office, we continually focus on the inclusion we feel as colleagues. Our diversity and inclusion committee sets goals that are integrated into our quarterly business planning meetings. When workers experience a climate of inclusion, they bring their best qualities to work, which means stronger business results for us and stronger financial outcomes for our clients.

This focus on diversity and inclusion comes from the top. IG's head office is in Winnipeg, where our chief executive officer Jeff Carney recently signed the Winnipeg Indigenous Accord, a public commitment to truth and reconciliation.

We've also become a signatory to the United Nations' Women's Empowerment Principles, committing to minimum targets for the number of women in various roles at our company. And during International Women's Day this past March, I was honoured to be featured within IG for my leadership skills and my commitment to empowering women.

I applaud our city's businesses and institutions that also contribute to our community's diversity. As more people from across the globe settle in Thunder Bay, we weave a more intricate fabric of diversity. It is our job as business owners, workers, and as citizens to ensure each person feels included and heard. With many voices, we contribute to one truly dynamic city.

We wish you and your family lots of happiness, prosperity and joy in the New Year 2019.

*Donna Yocom is regional director of Investors Group Financial Services Inc. Thunder Bay office. She and her team actively support United Way, Together Project, TBRHSC, Food Banks and MS Society. Donna was selected to serve on the 2018 Campaign Cabinet to raise \$10 million for cardiac care in Thunder Bay. She is also a member of the Lakehead Rotary Club and Women in Action Group. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.*



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Donna Yocom, right, regional director at IG Wealth Management, is pictured with her assistant, Emey Hendricks.**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### World's leaders seem lost in Oz

**S**OMETHING is happening with the democratic process in today's world that is resulting in leaders who appear to be living in some kind of magical land of Oz. Reality doesn't appear to be part of their daily lives, or decision making.

The United States has a climate change-denying president that — weird as he is — appears to have been the best choice for leader at the time.

Ontario has a leader that not only denies climate change but cancelled clean energy-producing projects like wind farms and solar power sites that were almost finished, costing untold millions of dollars with barely a whimper of objection.

Canada has a leader in the form of a prime minister that plays both sides of the coin on all issues speaking pro this and acting with all appearances of being anti the same issues.

France has a prime minister that lives in a bubble, taxing this and

that and adding costs to things that strangled his people so badly, they rose, en masse, in violent demonstrations that, in the end, will result in who knows what.

We don't have the strong, intelligent leaders we had in the distant past. Today's basis for all daily decisions compared to actually reality don't appear to be related in any way. For democracy to continue successfully in today's changing world requires more smarts (or maybe the same) as our strong leaders of the past. We can't have leaders who appear to be totally out of touch with reality.

Potential leaders need to pass a basic entrance exam based on their knowledge of climate, science, mathematics, economics and health as well as their ability to analyze and comprehend actual reality. Degrees are nice, but they are not the daily reality that the recommended testing will screen for. This has to be done before anyone even enters a seat on council, senate, or any position where there is the potential of them becoming a candidate for any

leader's position.

Such tests would need to be repeated every 10 years, with failure meaning 'goodbye and have a nice day.' If done today, it is apparent that most existing in power right now would fail. If we don't do this, our world will decay into some kind of unlivable fantasy world that can't be good for anyone in the long run (unless it is too late and we are already there).

**Richard Moquin**  
THUNDER BAY

### Council closed pool without full information

**W**ITH our new city council, one thing has not changed. Administration has free rein on dictating policies, while council plays the subservient role of never questioning such motives, thus rubber stamping everything.

This happened the night they decided to forever close Dease Park Pool, with no public consultation or verified information to rationalize such an action.

Why do they continually practise this pathetic practice of "we were elected to know what's best for you" attitude. If this kind of civic governance continues, we are in for a long four years of divisiveness, ambiguity and despair.

One of the deterrents used by administration to prevent the pool's repair is the apparent enormous cost (between \$1.5 million to \$3 million). As I understand, it will cost \$300,000 to decommission this pool.

When questioned on costs, manager of community services, Kelly Robertson admitted to not having any data to back up these costs. Even Coun. Foulds, who was opposed to this motion did not demand information to back up these estimates.

How can anyone on this council rationalize the decision to close this pool without having the full information to maintain or even decommission this facility? This is not responsible governance.

Are you concerned with the future of Dease Park Pool and other facilities? Then write or call your

member of city council.

A public meeting will be held on Thursday, Jan. 3 at the Mary J.L. Black Library at 6:30 p.m. to discuss what needs to be done to save this pool.

**Andy Wolff**  
THUNDER BAY

### Kids want to swim at Dease

**T**HE first vote of the new city council was to close Dease Pool. The children who swim here have a message for council: please keep our pool open.

**David Joynson**  
THUNDER BAY

*Readers' submissions are welcome by email sent to letters@chroniclejournal.com, by fax at 343-9409, or mail to 75 S. Cumberland St., P7B 1A3. Please include name, address, phone number.*