

Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness

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2011 November 21: For immediate release

Sculpture honours lives of homeless people

A new work of public art is being installed today to honour the lives of people who struggle to have adequate housing.

"Decent affordable housing is essential for everyone. And when everyone has a home, we have stronger healthier communities. This sculpture will be a powerful reminder to all Edmontonians that we can and must work together to achieve this in our city," says Colin Simpson, with Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH).

The sculpture is located in a small park on 103A Avenue, immediately north of City Hall, between 99 and 100 Streets. It was created by local sculptors Keith Turnbull and Ritchie Velthuis, with the participation of a number of artists who know the experience of homelessness

The design is a large doorway with a homeless person sitting in front of it. Small tiles mounted around the edges of the door represent ideas by the participating artists about why having a home is important.

"It was a powerful experience to work with the artists and hear their stories and passions as they created their tiles," says Turnbull. The artists worked at tables on the main floor of City Hall over several weeks earlier in the year when creating the tiles, so often had members of the public drop by to see them working.

The \$40 000 cost of the sculpture was mostly paid through a grant to ECOHH from Edmonton Arts Council's Community Public Arts program, with additional costs covered by ECOHH and other supporters of the project. There will be a public event at City Hall on December 1 to dedicate the work.

For several years ECOHH has held an annual memorial service to pay tribute to people who have died during the previous year from causes connected to homelessness or inadequate housing. "The sculpture will now mean that Edmontonians can be reminded all year round of the terrible cost of homelessness in our community," Simpson states. "Housing is more than four walls and a roof. It supports, community, having a home. We have the resources to make sure this is true in Edmonton. ECOHH hopes this new dramatic work of art will make a contribution to growing understanding and commitment to make this true."

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