

## Communication #12 - Taking Care of Business

November 2017



A Taste of That Thing in the Desert; Man Burn with Return of the Towers Photo by: Trevor Lalonde Photography

### LEA Goal Setting Meeting

On November 5, the LEA Board got together in Red Deer for its first goal setting meeting. This was an opportunity for us to do some intentional direction setting and to tie our activities to concrete goals to strengthen our structure and broaden the impact of our work.

Through the course of the meeting, we identified the following goals and set up concrete actions to achieve them:

1. Expand the number of year-round volunteer opportunities through subcommittee development.
  - Initiating work to develop Burners Without Borders, Communications, and Freezer Burn Committees
2. Support learning and leadership in our community by providing access to knowledge and experience we have collectively developed through:

- Developing an online toolbox for event production and other activities, which will serve as an open, online wiki for information, resources, and tools
- Hosting event production workshops/networking gatherings

We want to get more people involved in creating more art and community within Alberta on an ongoing basis, outside of just one or two events throughout the year. We also want to support people to take on leadership roles and making the projects they've been mulling over become a reality. Through our conversations, we set these goals and actions because we think they will help us achieve these objectives.



Do you think we're on the right track? What do you think of these goals and what they can include to be valuable for our regional community?

We've created a survey where you can provide feedback. [Click here to participate.](#)

In terms of the LEA's evolution, this meeting was a meaningful step and one the board hopes to continue annually.

*Choice quotes from participating Board members:*

"I thought it was going to be boring as hell, but holy guacamole was I ever wrong." - Remi aka Princess Sophia

"Goal setting makes me feel alive." - Partytime

"Not only was it was the best LEA meeting I have ever participated in, I think it's some of the best work we will have done as a board." - Leslie, in a goal-setting nerd frenzy

## **Introducing Two Shiny New LEA Board Members**

Please join us in welcoming Joel Magnan and Angela Watt aka Wicked, who joined the LEA board in September. Both Joel and Wicked are based in Edmonton and have already stepped up in big ways. Joel has taken on the role of Grants Officer, while Wicked has taken on projects around our finance process and the online toolbox.

## **Acknowledging an Extraordinary Alberta Burner**

You may have heard about the tragedy that unfolded at the Man Burn of this year's Burning Man. During a volunteer shift, one of our own risked their life to save another's. This selfless decision was nothing short of heroic.

Cubby, it is an honour to have you as part of this community.

This is his story:

---The 2017 Burn---

"That horrifying moment when you look around for an adult, but then you realize that you are an adult. So, you look around for an adultier adult, someone better at adulting than you...and you realize that you are the adult-est adult in the area...and you have to do something."

---My Story---

That was me. Right after the guy ran into the fire at the BRC burn this year.

After the incident at Burning Man on Saturday, September 2nd, 2017 where a man ran into the burn, and was pulled back out by firefighters, I wasn't really ready to share my part in the rescue, and my thoughts about the circumstances around the incident.

It's been a few months of processing it for me, and for countless others who were exposed to the trauma of the incident.

As you may guess, I was the firefighter who walked into the flames and pulled the victim out. I was assisted by other members of the fire safety team and we did what we could to save Aaron Joel Michell.

I certainly didn't ever wish to be in that kind of situation.

---The Disclaimer---

My words here do not represent any views of the Burning Man Organization, the Black Rock City Emergency Services Department, LEO, FB or anyone official. I was asked to write something, and if anything, I'm sharing my words as part of my healing process in the hopes that my words help others heal.

I will warn anyone reading further that there may be some parts of this narrative that may be triggering due to the incident trauma...

We'll probably never understand why Aaron Joel Mitchell chose to run into the flames. I hope that in the future, some understanding can be found, so that we can all gain some insight into the many complex parts of such things, and we can identify and help others who might have similar tendencies. I know that there are some details emerging that may help explain what may have caused this, but at this point much is still speculation and not in the scope of my writing.

### ---Burn Night---

I've been a volunteer firefighter at Burning Man since 2005. One of my favourite experiences is to be inner perimeter as part of the safety crew on burn night. It's crazy, chaotic, and somehow brings me joy and elation to watch the burn deep within the huge accumulated energy of hundreds of art cars, competing sounds, fire poofers, cheering dancing burners, lights, smoke and heat.

I was working inner perimeter as a firefighter this year on Burn night. I was assigned with my partner to the 10:00 side. We were sitting watching the ending of the burn, with a few pillars remaining of the man structure.

My first glimpse of the runner was off to the side, after he had broken through the perimeter and was running towards the blaze of the effigy structure. I hoped it was a prank, or that someone had accidentally dropped the perimeter early, or that the "Sandmen" would tackle him, or that somehow or another, it wasn't happening.

Chasing after runners isn't our job and was often specifically mentioned that we "don't chase" in our pre-burn briefing. We are the RITs (Rapid Intervention Teams), firefighters who protect people from getting too close to the fire, or help people out who have accidentally tripped while running around. There are rangers (Sandmen) who are legally allowed to intercept and use whatever means necessary to stop a runner.

He ran almost to the edge of the fire, with both Rangers and Firefighters behind him. I was so relieved when he started to run back towards the crowd. That feeling quickly turned to horror as he darted past both us and other Rangers and RIT teams and just dove into the fire, landing on his back about 3 metres inside the flames.

It happened in less time than it would have taken you to read this description. I was horrified at what I was seeing, and it seemed too unreal.

The quote from a facebook meme literally ran through my mind during that instant...

*"That horrifying moment when you look around for an adult, but you realize that you are an adult. So, you look around for an adultier adult, someone better at adulting than you...and you realize that you are the adult-est adult ...and you have to do something now."*

### ---The Rescue---

That's where I was. Standing at the edge of the flames, looking into them in some surreal way at an unimaginable horror as I watched the man lie on his back within the embers of the flames.

I had followed him to the edge of the flames while we chased around. He was about 5 metres inside the fire, lying on his back, not moving.

It seemed like it took forever for me to make the decision to go in and try to pull him out. I wasn't even certain I could do it. I evaluated hazards; there was a possible collapse hazard from the large columns still burning, there were superheated gases within the fire, extreme radiant heat from the flames, and trip hazards all around. To misjudge anything would have had serious consequences...

I tried to think of the best ways to initiate and complete a rescue, I looked for paths through the flames, I tried to think of other ways of doing this thing... It seemed like I stood there, for a very, very long time, knowing that everyone was watching me...

I knew that literally every second counted. It seemed at the time, that I thought about a lot of things in that brief moment, and it seemed to take forever, but later, watching video replay of the event, I didn't seem to hesitate any longer than it took to put my fire shield down and go in.

The difference between "real time", and "incident time" still amazes me...like some video game trick.

#### ---The Rescue: Part Two---

He only made one noise right after he landed in the flames...a kind of breathy moan. At the time, it made everything suddenly very real, and him very human, and it was my final motivator to act as I did.

I walked into the flames, bent down and grabbed his right ankle, and started dragging him out.

I had to bend into the flames to grab his right ankle. It felt like when I reach into my ceramics kiln to pull out a red hot raku pot. I've learned to not breath while doing so, and so I didn't breath while I was in the flames. That probably saved me. The heat was so intense that I almost dropped him as my hands felt like they were on a hot stovetop, even inside my fire gloves. The heat was so intense, it instantly melted the reflective stripes on my fire coat and in the brief time that I was bent over in the flames, the parts of my face were exposed to third degree burns, mostly the tip and sides of my nose.

Dragging the victim those 3 metres out of the flames also seemed to take forever, although it also looks very brief when viewed on video.

My fire gear by this point was soaking heat in and protecting me, but it was overwhelmed and I was really starting to feel the heat....like standing in a shower that is scalding. Also, unknown to me at the time, his other leg had gotten caught under a burning piece of wood and he was stuck at the edge of the flames. I had to stop, retreat, and catch my breath.

Other members of the RITs had come over and cleared the wood he was caught on. We went in again and started pulling him out further. By that time, we had managed to pull him out of the flames, but then the collapse happened.

#### ---The Collapse---

I heard the warning about the collapse through my radio earpiece and a warning shouted from my Division Leader, "Collapse...Collapse...Collapse". We all dropped the victim, and ran. You can't really look over your shoulder with a fire helmet and gear on, so we just ran and hoped we'd all be ok. We stopped right after, turned around, looked that everyone was ok, and went back to pull him out into a clear area. At that point, our role in the rescue was done.

### ---Advanced Life Support---

We had gotten him to a clear area, and most of the RITs were overwhelmed by the heat, the exertion, and the emotional circumstances of all that had just occurred. Other RIT teams had come over and formed a kind of wall to shield the scene from the main part of the crowd.

I was still trying to catch my breath, still feeling a lot of the heat on my face, my hands and through my turnout coat. My eyes were watering so much that I couldn't see. The team of the ALS (Advanced Life Support) ambulance took over the chain of care and started essential life support work on the victim. The medic team had the victim transported before I realized it was gone.

### ---Rehab---

I felt devastated. My brain was overwhelmed and my heart racing. One part of my thoughts was analysing the rescue, thinking about what else we needed to do, going through the next steps. I was also overwhelmed by so many different emotions; grief, sadness, relief, and horror. For some reason, I started to focus on the fingers of my gloves, which were glued together by the melted nylon of his leggings.

Our RIT team was replaced and we walked over to the Incident Command post for rehab.

I needed to process what happened. I've been on many accident scenes, doing my job, and helping people recover from misfortune, but each time afterward, you need to regain control of your emotions, process, and put things into a perspective that your mind can handle.

A medic at rehab checked me over, and I was fine other than the nose burns (which I didn't think was all that much at the time). Members of the CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) came over and asked if I wanted to talk, but at that point, I told them that I just needed some time to sit down and process. I walked over to where friends and family were sitting, met with my tribe and assured them I was ok, I found my lover and kissed her deeply and started the process of clearing the images from my mind.

I waited to be released for about an hour. My IC (Incident Command) team was overwhelmed and trying to cope with the situation. There was another serious incident going on at the temple at the same time, and crisis awareness was very high. There was a lot going on, and everyone was trying to react and establish control over the new dynamic.

### ---Processing---

I was in strangely oscillating mood swings for the next couple of days; elation, guilt, sorrow, anger happiness; rotating emotions without basis, like my brain was trying to process which feeling fit best by plugging them in and seeing what they did

This is something that has happened before when I've been in a stressful survival situation; food tasted amazing, air was divine, I was more deeply in love with my lover, and I was hugging everyone I met while at the same time feeling emotions of guilt, sorrow, like I should have saved him, been quicker, or planned the rescue better.

Friends came by, offering support and concern. My only answer was that I was ok physically other than the nose, and that I was still processing mentally.

When we got back to our camp, my lover and I went directly to bed in our camper, had passionate sex for over an hour and a half, after which I slept a deep exhausted sleep. At the time, it was the best way of erasing the horrors in my mind, and replacing them with something more joyful.

### ---Starting Re-Entry to Default World---

In the next morning, I talked with my campmates, let them know that I was ok, and that if anyone needed to talk about what happened, that they could talk to me, or that we could refer them to one of the CIT people. I've told that to a lot of people since, and ask anyone needing help to please reach out.

I went over to Fire Camp, and talked with our Fire Chief, who told me that the victim had arrived at UC Davis Burn Center in Sacramento alive, and was the first person in their history with that extent of injuries to have ever done so, let alone from the high desert of Nevada. Knowing that somehow helped me to process. I was overwhelmed with pride in our whole chain of care team, those of us who had pulled him out, the ALS Ambulance crew who had gotten him intubated and transported to the event field hospital "Rampart", where further burn treatment, sedation, and escharotomies were performed, and where he was prepped for immediate air ambulance transport. If he had any chance of survival, we had given it to him.

Later, Rampart treated me for my burns, which healed slowly over the next couple of weeks. I still have some loss of feeling at the tip of my nose, but nothing lasting. Any harm I or others have experienced from the incident are deeper inside, and sadly less accessible for healing.

### ---The Healing---

At the time of writing this; the initial shocks we all had of the incident have subsided. We are all now on a path of healing.

We know that incidents like this reverberate through our tribe, our friends, and the whole Burning Man community, and we will come together to heal.

Even though it is an uncomfortable state of mind for most of us; we can allow ourselves to hold with the many confused feelings an incident like this brings; horror, anger, frustration, compassion, sadness, and even joy of living.

We can permit ourselves to have a full spectrum of emotions. Compassion and anger can both exist within our hearts without competing.

We can feel traumatized, and we can seek help processing our trauma.

I encourage anyone struggling (for any trauma) to seek shoulders to lean on, friends to talk to, and guidance from professional help.

We heal together.



## Leave No Trace Report - Freezer Burn 2017: Where the Wild Things Roam



Your 2017 LNT Team!

Each year the Fraya offers us a small window of opportunity to explore, shake our booties, forget ourselves, dismantle paradigms, create new dreams and make lasting connections. As we give in to the potential of endless possibilities, there is an awareness of how temporary it all is. Fleeting moments we take out with us....just like our MOOP (Matter Out of Place).

We have an opportunity to take these brilliant moments to become conscious citizens and carry with us principles to guide us. If you've gotten down on your hands and knees to pick up fibres, or line sweeps with your campmates, you know that our goal is to not just leave no trace of ourselves, but to hopefully leave it better than it was found.

Okay, Okay...it's time to congratulate you! Yes you! You successfully left no trace on the Fraya, helping ensure we can return to the Ranch we've come to love and care for.



Hard to believe there was a village of almost 1,000 people here the day before.



The Fraya Restoration team is crucial in ensuring our activities leave minimal impact on the Ranch's ecosystem. The inspection is in lines with passing Black Rock City's requirements, including leaving behind less than one foot of moop per acre of land.



Click the link to the map we made for you and follow the trace of the Inspection Team:  
[2017 Where the Wild Things Roam MOOP Map](#)

As you can see we have a lot of green, which is a good thing! The places you see yellow, well, those are places where we need some practice and education on MOOP Sweeping. Orange is where things got dirty and required significant time and multiple sweeps. It's not hard to miss the Black w/Red Rim dots...these were large pieces of MOOP left behind.

Sometimes, you have to get up close and personal.

The team met at First Response and separated into two groups, one who swept the upper areas, the other the lower areas. The upper team formed a line and began to sweep at the Enchanted Forest, ending with free camping:

- A full greywater container and vomit, which was required to be extracted, were found in the location of the Flociety camp.
- Open camping areas along the elk fence towards Kidsville and in the overflow camping areas yielded: a tent pole, tent pegs, and small types of MOOP - fibres, small bits of cardboard.
- More vomit was found and extracted from behind the Portos along the elk fence, closest to KidsVille.
- One piece of rebar was found in the Disco Dive camp area.
- Hardened wet paper towel was found in the grass in open camping next to first response.
- One tent peg was found in the open camping area that was given to the Granny Panties camp next to HKATBC.
- The team spent quite a bit of time picking up tinsel in open camping along the Elk fence, closer to where security was camped.

The lower team worked Sparkle Pony Trail, and managed to move quite quickly through the lower section, over to the Space Grove, and up Grove Ave before breaking for lunch. This was a significant improvement over last year. After lunch we did a sweep of the parking lot and First Response before doing final teardown.



A sweep line is a beautiful thing.

### **2017 MOOP Map is green**

There's always room to improve, but let's celebrate a mostly green map! As a community we can show our strengths in upholding to the principles, including Leave No Trace.

Now for the Bad News...

While this may have been the cleanest we've left the space post-event, it was definitely the filthiest during the event. The amount of trash and beer cans around the porto-potties each morning was atrocious. If you're not going to take your empties back to camp, then don't leave camp with full ones. No one should have to clean up after you, it's your responsibility to clean up after yourself. Do better.

Well done Freezer Burn 2017!

Sincerely,  
Your Leave No Trace Team

## Grants

We have a mentionable amount of funds to grant to artists for 2017. Our next deadline is December 31st. [Click here to learn more about what we fund and how to submit an application.](#)

This year, we have funded 14 projects, through both our regular grants stream and through funding from Calgary Arts Development. The projects we've funded include:

- Dance With Me (interactive dance floor)
- Freeze Frame (interactive photo frame)
- Return of the Towers (smoke & laser towers)
- Laugh Lines (visual photo series)
- Burning Love
- FWF (Freezer Burn Wrestling Federation)
- Blasto 2.0



Freeze Frame



Laugh Lines

Photos by: Trevor Lalonde Photography

## Workshop - Supporting Emotional Well-Being in our Community

On November 25th, a community workshop was held at the Calgary Eau Claire Market. There was a great discussion about setting healthy boundaries, and how very hard it is to do without practice. The group raised many excellent questions, including "How can we personally fight mental health stigma?"

The awareness of Cognitive Distortions was identified as a positive coping skill, as these subconscious and negative perceptions of reality often affect how we relate with each other. For example: if you see a person who is grumpy, you may think they are mad you. We all have inherited cognitive distortions to a greater or lesser degree. This is basically the workshop in a nutshell: it's normal to have challenging emotions in life, however we can change the way we respond to them and we can easily support others by remembering a few simple principles and the strengths that we already have.



Printed materials were provided to participants ("When to Seek Professional Help," "How to set Realistic and Achievable Goals," "Talking to my friend about Suicide," etc.)

Future discussions may happen that have a tighter focus, and contain more time for discussion and practice of concepts. There was much interest about learning how to set healthy boundaries in any relationship. If you would like to be notified of future discussion groups, please email Lara Arnott (brightseed@gmail.com).

## **A Taste of That Thing in the Desert**



Hippo Love

Photo by: Trevor Lalonde Photography

For the 4th year, the LEA has hosted A Taste of That Thing in the Desert as part of Calgary's Beakerhead festival. This event is an opportunity for us to showcase the creativity, generosity, and spirit that makes our community so special.

For the second year in a row we were able to have a burn in downtown Calgary. Due to the fire ban, it looked like we wouldn't be permitted to have our burn. With mere hours to spare, the Fire Chief gave us the OK and the crew made it happen.

Thank you to the artists, performers, gift-purveyors, and volunteers who made this event dazzle! Special thanks to our team leads; Cubby, Pyro Monkey, Gnomette, High Beams, Joel, Diggy Shakes and WhatsHerName.



Aviax

Photo by: Trevor Lalonde Photography

Until the New Year!

Dina, Favrah, Granola, Joel, Leslie, Partytime, Princess Sophia, & Wicked  
Your LEA Board of Directors