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"THE SECTION FOREMAN'S WIFE" BY WILLIAM KURELEK
"I NEVER LEFT EDMONTON FOR SOMEWHERE ELSE," JOE SHOOTER likes to say. "I never felt I had to." He is in his law office on a quiet afternoon, looking out through a wall of windows at the city he has seen grow from a community of 20,000 to an urban centre of 580,000, where he sees new strangers everyday. Shooter was born in Edmonton and is now in his middle sixties. His hair is wiry and thick, his build almost as trim as in his football days with the University of Alberta Golden Bears. He graduated in the late forties, almost on the eve of the oil boom that came with the famous Imperial Oil discovery at Leduc, just south of Edmonton, in 1947. Then, as he says, he embarked on several careers — he built a solid law practice, helped launch the Edmonton Eskimos football team, prospered in oil and real estate, and crowned it all in 1965 by founding one of Canada's premier theatres, the Citadel, which this season celebrates its 25th anniversary.

But Shooter's favorite subject is neither himself nor his careers. It is Edmonton. And as he speaks of the city, especially the city he remembers when it really hit its stride, he recalls an incident in his life that serves well as a parable of the creation of modern Edmonton. It took place on a brisk fall morning in 1949. Shooter and his father, Morris, a devout Jew who came to Edmonton in 1910 from Russia, drove out to a section of land near Leduc to which Joe and some friends had bought mineral rights, hoping to strike oil. They had neither seismic readings nor geological surveys, just a fervent faith that since others had struck oil at Leduc so might they.

Shooter's father climbed a fence, stood looking over the land, then took a piece of bread from his pocket. He sprinkled it with salt, then prayed. "Don't worry," he told his son. "You'll get oil." Shooter and his friends did, not just with the first well but with more than a dozen. Then in the spiral of their success in the fifties they sold everything and put up an office edifice in Edmonton called the Petroleum Building. "We provided office space for small oil companies," says Shooter, "and I acted for many of them. It was a fascinating time to be in Edmonton. The streets were just buzzing with deals over oil that was or wasn't in the ground. I've been able to get involved with many things in Edmonton, from sport to business to culture, but oil was the engine — for me and for the Edmonton you see today."

On the same afternoon that Shooter was speaking of Edmonton, John F. Gilpin, a young historian with an encyclopaedic friendship, was planning his next trip to England, not to holiday but to spend several weeks in London's Guildhall Library studying archival documents from a long-gone era of Edmonton that conceal how, before the city's oil prosperity, British-sponsored agriculture provided its matrix of survival. "Edmonton," says Gilpin, "has, like the West itself, always been tied to the international economy. At the turn of the century it was international wheat prices. Now it is international crude-oil prices." Gilpin spent much of the autumn tracing the city's past in the aging papers of British investors who came to Edmonton as early as 1906, a couple of years after it became a city.

The first settlers in the region arrived in the mid-1800s. They were Cree Indians attracted by the proliferation of fur-bearing animals. Even that early activity, Gilpin points out, turned Edmonton in the direction of world markets. For when reports reached London that otter and beaver were so plentiful that women and children were killing them with sticks and hatchets, British fur traders were not long in coming — from the North West Company and, of course, the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1795 Duncan McGillivray of the Hudson's Bay Company founded the community, naming it after Edmonton in England, the birthplace of a deputy governor of the company.

Perhaps it is because of its varied past as a fur-trading station, an agricultural centre and oil city that many Canadians hold an impression of Edmonton that is unfocused and stark, like a depiction in a comic book: a Wild West city of prospectors, cowboys and oil riggers. It sticks. Joe Shooter recalls an aunt in New York who, as late as the 1960s, refused to visit Edmonton for fear of manhandling bands of muggers. A statue in a gleaming new hotel in Edmonton's Eaton Centre may even reinforce this lingering frontier image. A grizzled prospector, his mule burdened with pickaxe, shovelful and hod and bucket, the statue is inscribed with the words, "It shan't ain't the town it used to be."

From winters seem colder than history depicts them, but Edmontonians are a winter people, so that by December, when the wind whistles in from the mountains and temperatures soon locked far below...
zero, the weekend air echoes with the thump of pups on outdoor ice and the swoosh of skis on the slopes of Rabbit Hill. Hundreds of cross-country skiers work their way along a city-wide trail, and in the evening the rink below the legislature buzzes with people, while nearby tree blazes with lights that almost seem to warm the cold, northern night.

EDMONTON IS CANADA'S FIFTH LARGEST CITY. While the population of Edmonton itself is slightly less than 600,000, nearby commuter cities such as Redwater, St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan and Spruce Grove swell the area's population to nearly 800,000.

The city, which is Alberta's capital, surprises some visitors, who expect it to squat on bleak prairie flatland. In actual fact it is set in a lush valley on either side of the winding North Saskatchewan River, and its urban towers, when viewed from roads around the city's periphery, present one of the more striking cityscapes in Canada. While most residents still work in the oil industry or in related fields, a wider range of opportunities is opening up as the city continues to diversify, a process that was instigated by the decline in crude-oil prices in the early 1980s, which underlined Edmonton's too-heavy dependency on the oil industry. And though its booming growth of the late seventies is gone, as it is gone from Alberta generally, it is still a city on the move: it has more commercial space per capita than most cities in North America; it has the largest physical size of any city in Canada (roughly 670 square kilometers), and it has the country's largest municipal budget ($1.2 billion in 1989). "The recession that came in 1982," says Terry Canavan, a former hockey player who has been on Edmonton's city council since 1971 and recently served as mayor, "was not all bad. People who shouldn't have been in business left. The city is making its comeback, but it knows that future economic growth will not be as it was in the oil boom of the late seventies: rapid and haphazard. It will be prudent and planned."

Not far from the mayor's office, along a well-treed street called Saskatchewan Drive, a tall man, who called himself Jared Jaw, ambles down the steps of his apartment building, turns a corner and heads in the direction of Whyte Avenue. His name is Rudy Wiebe, and he is among the country's most respected novelists (he is a winner of a Governor General's Award and most recently the author of Playing Dead: a Contemplation Concerning the Arctic). For more than 20 years he has been a professor of English and creative writing at Edmonton's University of Alberta. Wiebe's stroll along a short portion of Whyte Avenue is broken now and then as he glances in the front windows of a number of bookstores, a total of nine in eight blocks. At one, he enters and after browsing goes upstairs to the offices of his publisher, then down the hall to the offices of a film company for which he is writing scripts. "Once," he says, "I'd have to go to Toronto or Montreal for these contacts with publishers and film companies. Now, with the city's cultural vitality, I don't even have to leave Edmonton."

Later, in his tidy office at the university, where his windows look down the slope of the North Saskatchewan River valley, Wiebe wonders why, despite the fast-growing cultural depth, some Canadians still hold an impression of Edmonton as a cultural backwater. "That impression exists in many minds," he says, "and I think the reason has to do with a natural human instinct to stereotype communities."

Then, in a quiet voice, he speaks for a long time about the aspects of the city that made his decision in 1967 to move there one of the most fortuitous of his entire life: the presence of its 16 theatre companies; the city's rich ethnicity, evident on Heritage Day when 300,000 people throng to a par to visit displays of 44 ethnocultural groups; its unique youth programs, run by thousands of volunteers, climaxing in late January with Canada's largest minor hockey league tournament with 10,000 children taking to the ice. "This is my place," says Wiebe with a soft smile of contentment. "This is my town. This is where I want to be."

The university in which Wiebe teaches has academic standards Canadians sometimes overlook because, say Edmontonians, their city is far from the centre of the country and close to its northern hinterland, which people don't often associate with their academic life. In fact, the University of Alberta, whose well-endowed buildings stand on a rolling campus of almost 90 hectares, has 30,000 students, making it Canada's third largest university. More important, it has a standard of excellence recognized among academics throughout North America and reflects in a research library of three million titles, in its numerous graduate programs — in law and medicine, for example — and in the doctoral programs it offers in almost every field.

Perhaps most surprising of all is the fact that it is the only anglophone-run university in the country at which a full degree can be taken in the French language. The city's cultural vitality — flourishing not just in its theatres, which have the biggest attendance records in Canada, but in the celebrated Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and Edmonton Opera Company — grows from a particular community soil. It is largely a gift from its immigrant population (mainly those who came from Europe in the postwar era), people who understood that the arts are not peripheral but central to a community's quality of life. Moreover, Edmonton's location, described by a local writer as the "gateway to the North," gave it impetus. "There is a sense," says sociologist Leslie Kennedy, who teaches at the University of Alberta, "that if we don't create our own cultural life and support it, we won't have one. That's why, when you attend a symphony concert you'll see the same people that you'll see at an Edmonton Oilers hockey game. Edmontonians are great participants in community life." That characteristic caught national attention in 1978, when 8,000 volunteers ran the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton, and in 1983, when 15,000 volunteers ran the World University Games. In fact, with 40 percent of the city's population involved in volunteer work, Edmonton has the highest percentage of volunteers in the entire country.

Among those volunteers is Frank Goheen, who, after spending most of his career in the business, took on the job of administrative director of Edmonton's Northern Light Theatre in 1983. He helped strengthen its administrative and financial health, while finding the activity a kind of personal renewal. "It's marvelous working in the theatre life of Edmonton," he says. "It's an incredible city with so many theatres, and the unique part about it is that it has an enormous number of volunteers."

EDMONTON'S MOST FAMOUS THEATRE began in the middle sixties after Joe Shoc- tor — who as well running his practice and business interests was producing plays on Broadway — heard that a caller to an Edmonton radio station had chided him: "If Shoch can produce these plays for Broadway, why doesn't he do the same thing in Edmonton?" Within months Shoch had sold some land to enable him to purchase several properties — including an old Salvation Army Citadel — which he and three partners turned into a theatre. Today the Citadel, as it came to be called, is Canada's largest noncommissioned theatre and is described by the cultural commentator Arnold Edinsonough as being one of the country's greatest theatre success stories. On September 13, when the Citadel opened its 25th season — with Robin Phillips' memorable production of Shakespeare's A Midsum- mer Night's Dream — the theatre had passed a cultural milestone not just for Edmonton but, indeed, the entire nation. The Citadel now occupies an entire city block, and its patrons include thousands of people who have never before set foot inside a theatre.

Award-winning novelist and professor of English at the University of Alberta, Rudy Wiebe feels that Edmonton is far from being the cultural backwater some people assume it to be.
Instead, unemployment soared. Housing dropped in value.... There was a general loss of confidence in the economy. But today, Kennedy observes that Edmonton people — partly as a result of good civic management, partly because of their strong foundation in volunteerism — have come through the recession in good condition. "That combination of the managerial ethic and the volunteer commitment is hard to beat," says Kennedy.

"When government shifted away from certain social programs in the hard times, volunteers immediately moved in. Thus, the impact of the downturn on individuals and families was minimized." Kennedy, who grew up in Montreal, studied at the University of Western Ontario and completed his doctoral degree at the University of Toronto before moving to Edmonton 13 years ago. He says that the city, far from being flooded by purely self-seeking entrepreneurs, has a unique depth of compassion. As illustration he refers to the tragic tornado that hit the city in July 1983, leaving almost 30 people dead and 400 homeless. "Tragedy brings out the best or worst in a community," he says. "In Edmonton it brought out the best. After the tornado, the number of people who turned out to help was truly incredible. One woman who set up a depot in a small shop to receive goods was forced to move to an enormous warehouse — the lineup of people with contributions stretched not for blocks, but for kilometers."

But Edmonton is not free from the mistakes and misjudgments that many cities, especially in boom periods, are prone to make. Perhaps the most needless errors had to do with the neglect of its heritage. Too many landmarks came down in the 1970s when the wrecker's ball swung far too widely: the beautiful sandstone courthouse, for example; and the downtown post office, a brick edifice that was the most noticeable heritage building on the horizons. Among a great many people there is deep regret. Bob Marsh, who grew up in the city and spent his working life at the nearby Strathcona oil refinery, put it clearly during a drive through the city: "I'm not a great fan of these shiny modern towers. I'm glad we have some old buildings. We're building too many now gone — the Tegler Building, the courthouse, the post office." Terry Cavanagh admits that mistakes were made in the commercial rush. But today, he says, the city is heritage conscious, a fact that helps protect the historic Macdonald Hotel, still standing by the river bank, surrounded by new glass structures, gently reminding us that Edmonton has a past.

But Edmontonians are doing more to better their city: "An protecting old buildings. They are looking forward, working to ensure that future development will only enhance Edmonton. Since the mid-1980s, for example, the municipal government has committed itself to revitalizing downtown and in 1986 formed the Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation to help make downtown a most attractive place by promoting the development of housing, cultural institutions and new commercial buildings.

The catalyst for this massive effort to revitalize downtown was, at least in part, a spectacular new shopping mall, nine kilometres from the heart of the city. The West Edmonton Mall, the largest mall in the world, is the ultimate example of the fact that in our age, shopping and recreation have become one. The mall's statistics are startling: it is eight city blocks long, contains more than 900 stores, 18 movie theatres, 1,000 parking for 20,000 cars, for 15,000 employees and last year was the destination for nine million tourists, who left behind in the city of Edmonton, about $500 million. Thousands of tourists come to the mall from around the world, and each day a local tourist company flies visitors to Edmonton from Vancouver and Victoria specifically to visit it. But people do more than shop in the mall. They stay at its hotel, enjoy rides in its amusement park, descend depths of water in its subterranean, wander through its aviaries and, if so inclined, drop in to worship at its chapel. Its commercial triumphancy strikes some people, including some Edmontonians, as excessive, as the "unconscious" application of the "right size winner. For one thing, while the city was struggling to rebound from the recession, the construction of the mall, begun in 1981 and completed in 1986, was a great boon for employment. Moreover, even hard-hearted anti-hippiedom might be se- duced, when Edmontonians find their Winter temperatures can fall to a withering minus 40 degrees Celsius, into slipping into its enormous blue wave pool, the size of

many a Caribbean head, giving Edmontonians something of summer in the depth of winter. "It's fabulous," says Leslie Kennedy, who takes his children in winter. "And consider its economic attraction: If you lived in Victoria, "Sask., and wanted to take your family on a warm winter vacation you could spend $3,000 to go to Disneyland or $900 to come to the water park."

ON ANOTHER SIDE OF THE CITY, not far from the Commonwealth Stadium, stands the Northlands Coliseum, where Edmonton's hockey passion for sport (for many years it held the world's best female basketball team) culminated in the 1980s, when the Edmonton Oilers hockey team — with history's finest hockey player, Wayne Gretzky — won four Stanley Cup championships. "I saw Gretzky score five goals one night," Kennedy said one afternoon, "and there were three impossible."

Gretzky, who with the Oilers broke almost every scoring record in the history of the National Hockey League, was traded to the Los Angeles Kings in 1988 by team owner Peter Pocklington, the entire city underwent something akin to collective suicide. Many people who aren't hockey fans were gripped by his departure. There is no doubt that the Oilers — especially the team's former star — were greatly responsible for putting Edmonton on the international sports map.

Many people in Edmonton hope, as Joe Shoctor hoped on that day in let's office a few months ago, that the city will never become huge. They know, of course, that prosperity and growth go hand in hand. But still, many residents seem to hope that Edmonton's population will stay close to what it is now — large but not enormous. "I don't want Edmonton to grow too big," Joe Shoctor said on the afternoon of his recollections. "I'm afraid it would lose some of its friendliness. People might not appreciate as much. And you might not be able to see the sky..."

Perhaps it is that spirit that reveals what Edmonton has to teach the rest of us — how to live harmoniously with our environment in the midst of modernity and in doing as stands amid old values and new visions, harking us to the landscape of the future.
Joan of Architecture

In March 1959 TIME Magazine carried a photograph of two middle-aged men and a young woman, identified as "Philip Johnson, Mies van der Rohe and Client Lambert." The picture recorded an event that was crucial, in different ways, to the careers of all three. On the day it was taken, Philip Johnson, having just worked on his first major office building, was beginning his climb to the status he finally reached in the 1980s, as the favorite architect of corporate America (and the design consultant, incidentally, of the CBC Broadcast Centre currently being built in Toronto). Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, for his part, had just consolidated his position as the towering genius of modernism by designing (with Johnson's help) the one great New York structure of his career—the handsome, no-expense-spared Seagram Building on Park Avenue, described in the TIME article as "the definitive statement of what a skyscraper can be." Time has proven that Time was right. Serene and aloof on its vast granite-and-marble plaza, the Seagram Building stands today as a historic example of what happens when a client has the vision, patience and tolerance to let a great architect control everything from the bronze sheathing ("a noble material," Mies said) right down to the doorknobs, fire alarms and mail chutes.

And the woman Time called Client Lambert? In the picture she's the happiest looking of the three, and for good reason. On that day, at age 31, Phyllis Lambert was in the process of discovering herself, turning into the unique and useful person she badly wanted to become. She had touched architectural greatness; she had been midwife at the birth of a masterpiece, and ahead she could glimpse the outlines of a life devoted to architecture; a life in which she would make serious decisions and cause important things to happen, a life in which her inherited wealth would be used to make an eloquent statement about civilization. In the next three decades, as her career twisted and turned, architecture was always at the core of it. In retrospect it seems obvious that the Seagram Building set her on the path to the creation of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, which opened last spring in Montreal and quickly established itself as the most imaginative and original act of philanthropy in Canadian history.

The Canadian Centre for Architecture is like nothing else on earth. Located a few blocks west of the centre of Montreal, it's first of all a specialized museum housed in a classically elegant
rather than passively accepting others' views or how to spend her money, she became an authority on her chosen object of patronage, architecture. It became the focus of her life, and she spoke about it with steadily growing authority. ""In the last few years, I've received a lot of attention,"" she says. ""I've learned to enjoy it, to understand, and I've learned about the built environment."

The recent centennial of the American Institute of Architects, which celebrates the professional accomplishments of the past 100 years, has renewed interest in the field. However, the need for architectural education and research continues to grow. As a result, the University of Washington has established a new department of architecture, with the goal of preparing students for the challenges of designing in the modern world.

Even then, the physical shape of her project wasn't clear and its intellectual dimensions were only partly formed. She knew that the project was to be called ""The American Institute of Architects."" She also knew that it would be housed in a building designed by the firm of I. M. Pei andAssociates. However, the exact details of the project remained to be worked out.

When she entered the building, she was greeted by a large painting of a group of architects, which she had commissioned from a local artist. The painting was an important part of the project, and she wanted it to be a symbol of the commitment of the architects to the city and the country.

In 1990, she was invited to speak at the ""Architecture and the City"" conference in New York. Her speech was well received, and she was asked to give a keynote address at the ""Architecture and the City"" conference in London the following year. She accepted the invitation and gave a speech on the importance of architecture in the modern world.

Later, when the architects of the project were in the design phase, she visited the site to see the progress firsthand. She was pleased with the work being done and encouraged the architects to continue on their path.

When the project was completed, she was invited to attend the opening ceremony. She arrived at the site with her family and walked through the building together. The architects were thrilled to see their work come to life, and she was proud to be a part of the project.

As the years passed, the project grew in size and scope. It became a symbol of the city's commitment to the arts and a source of pride for the architects and the community. As she looked at the finished building, she knew that it was more than just a structure. It was a symbol of the city's commitment to the future and a testament to the power of architecture.
ANCIENT BUILDINGS AROUND ROME. LOOKING AT A FUTURISTIC SKETCH OF A PRIVATE HOUSE MADE BY BADENER-WEIL UNFILTERED IN 1967, WE CAN SEE IN A MOMENT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FUTURE AS IMAGINED AND AS IT ACTUALLY UNFOLDED: THE HOUSE HAS A MASS FOR DOCKING A DINING ROOM.

AT THE CENTRE, ARCHITECTURE IS NOT DEFINED NORMALLY OR IN PURITY OF AESTHETIC TERMS. ENGINEERING ACHIEVEMENTS, WHETHER SYMBOLOGICAL OR EPHERISH (LIKE THE EIFFEL TOWER) OR PURELY PRACICAL (LIKE THE GRAIN SILOS) OFTEN SHOW UP IN THE COLLECTIONS. BOOKS AND DRAWINGS DOCUMENT THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUILDINGS THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES:

AND IN THE EVENT DID MOVE A 380-TONNE OBELISK 248 METRES NORTH OF ST. PETER’S.

IN OUR OWN TIME, THE AGE OF INDIVIDUALISM, ARCHITECTS AND DEVELOPERS OFTEN DESIGN BUILDINGS THAT WORK PERFECTLY WELL IN ISOLATION BUT DON’T FIT AT ALL INTO THEIR SURROUNDINGS. THE CENTRE IS PART OF THE MOVEMENT IN FAVOR OF REASSIMILATING THE OLD IDEA OF CONTEXT.

"ARCHITECTURE," AS PETER ROSE PUTS IT, "IS ON SOME FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL ABOUT INTEGRATION." A GOOD BUILDING FITS INTO ITS STREET, ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD, ITS CITY AND INTO THE HISTORY OF ALL OF THEM.


WHEN IT CAME TIME TO CREATE THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE SHE DECIDED THE PHYSICAL MUSEUM ITSELF WOULD HAVE TO MAKE A LARGE, RESONANT STATEMENT.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

From a handicapped child in British Columbia to fledgling playwrights in Quebec, the demands on Imperial’s contributions program are many and varied.

BY SHONA M’KAY

IMMIGRATION: A CRISIS IN CANADA

BY SHONA M’KAY

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

FROM A HANDICAPPED CHILD IN BRITISH COLUMBIA TO FLEDDGING PLAYRIGHTS IN QUEBEC, THE DEMANDS ON IMPERIAL’S CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM ARE MANY AND VARIED.

JORDAN ASHBY

I N A BOTTOM DRAWER OF A CABINET LOCATED AT IMPERIAL OIL’S CORPORATE CONTRIBUTIONS OFFICE IN TORONTO I S AN OLD REGISTER. DATING FROM THE 1940S, THE BOOK DOCUMENTS THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT WERE AMONG THE FIRST NONPROFIT ASSOCIATIONS TO RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM IMPERIAL. THE REGISTER — SOMEWHAT SPARSE IN DETAIL AND LACKING IN ORGANIZATION — LISTS SUCH ITEMS AS A $10,000 DONATION TO THE B.C. FLOOD RELIEF FUND IN 1948, A $500 STIPEND GIVEN IN 1949 TO
the Sarnia Boy Scouts for the renovation of a campsite and an unspecified contribution to the University of Manitoba for the establishment of a fellowship.

Much has changed since that time. Certainly, record-keeping has. Today, Imperial’s contributions division chronicles information about specific donations in a much more comprehensive manner. Given the scope of the company’s current involvement in the community, it is important to track all charitable contributions made by the company. The list of recipients includes hundreds of organizations across the country, ranging from a few hundred to thousands of dollars.

Despite differences, the approach to documenting financial support, through both traditional and digital means, remains consistent. This ensures that the company’s philanthropic efforts are transparent and accountable.

While the specifics of each contribution may differ, the overarching goal remains consistent: to support a wide range of community organizations and initiatives. From educational institutions to healthcare facilities, the impact of Imperial’s philanthropy is extensive, touching various sectors and making a meaningful difference in the lives of many.

The success of these initiatives is measured by the positive outcomes they bring. Whether it’s providing necessary resources to organizations or matching employee donations, the company’s contributions play a significant role in supporting the needs of the community.

Through these efforts, Imperial demonstrates its commitment to being a good corporate citizen, supporting the development and well-being of the communities in which it operates. The company’s legacy of giving is a testament to its values and its dedication to making a lasting impact.
Since graduating from theatre school in 1973, Daniel Simard (left) and Jean-Denis Leduc have dreamed of establishing a theatre dedicated to the production of important new Canadian works. Montreal's Théâtre La Licorne is the fulfillment of that dream.

I t's hard to pin Harriet Egbert down for an interview these days. At the age of 73 she has never been busier. In the past year the young-voiced grandmother has been a regular volunteer at a community Misson-on-Wheels program and has also found time to belong to bridge and book-discussion groups, regularly attend plays and learn the ancient Chinese martial art of Tai Chi. "Certainly I still have time to spend a morning reading, my favorite activity," she says, "but I feel bad about the time, it's true, I'm out and about." Although always "fairly active" Egbert credits the variety and richness of her current lifestyle, at least in part, to Fully Alive, a 10-week, two-hour program she took at a local senior citizens' centre two years ago. A self-help program that's run by seniors and targeted to individuals who are "50 years old and better," Fully Alive explores the means by which people can meet the challenges of being senior members of today's society.

"We begin by helping people identify the powers they, as human beings, have," says Jeanne Schnell, Fully Alive's development coordinator. "We can, for example, talk about what we eat and how we exercise. We can be assertive and learn something new. We can have hope and we can forgive. Both crying and laughing are powers we have to help ourselves. Once participants become aware that they have these powers, they can use them to deal effectively with the challenges in their lives." According to Schnell, such empowerment can result in changes that range from returning to school to taking responsibility for one's own health. "In some cases, the results can be dramatic," she adds. "But in most instances what we see is a gentle blossoming. It's wonderful to watch."

There's no need to sell Warren Boucher on Fully Alive. A controller with Esso Resources in Calgary as well as chairman of Fully Alive's management committee, he has been a fan of the program since his wife, Bev, became a Fully Alive facilitator three years ago. "There's no doubt in my mind that Fully Alive addresses an enormous need," he says. "There are a great many people who are not prepared for growing older. Often, with a job or children gone, older men and women feel useless, and that they're not needed anymore. What's worse is that they don't change their way of thinking they often make themselves depressed and even physically ill. Fully Alive helps to reverse that trend."

Indeed, so successful has the program become that its courses are now being offered in cities and towns throughout western Canada. In addition, it has attracted attention from senior-citizen groups, social organizations and governments from Victoria to St. John's. "It's no wonder there's all this interest," notes Schnell. "There are more seniors in Canada today than ever before, and everyone is waking up to the fact that it makes neither social nor economic sense to isolate this group. That's exactly what has happened in the past. What we're all searching for are positive means to help seniors maintain their status as active and contributing members of society. Surely, that is everyone's benefit." Harriet Egbert, taking a brief pause, agrees: "Growing old means that sometimes you feel pain and loneliness. Certainly I have felt some of that since my husband died last year. But what Fully Alive taught me was that I take responsibility for my feelings—and change them. I can decide to brood or I can call a friend or take a walk. Once you take control of your life you find the world really can be a wonderful place. It's amazing."

Imperial has supported Montreal's Théâtre La Licorne since its first open-in doors in 1981. Most recently, the corporation gave the organization a grant of $30,000, which will be used for operating expenditures over the next three years.

Daniel Simard, co-director of Théâtre La Licorne, has a case of the jitters. That's understandable. It's opening night of Joelyme Théâtre La Licorne due ses Larmes (Joelyme Théâtre La Licorne for its tears) by Quebec playwright Marie Laberge. But, more significantly, it's the first night that La Licorne's new restaurant, which can seat up to 200 people, is open for business in its new premises in north-central Montreal. "We've been working toward this for a long time," says Simard. "So, it's natural that I have a few butterflies in my stomach." Yet it's not nervousness that one detects in Simard's singular-faceted face. There is pride too. That's also understandable. Since graduating from the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique de Montréal in 1973, Simard and his partner, Jean-Denis Leduc, have dreamed of establishing a theatre dedicated to the production of Canadian plays. Working closely with the playwright. "While recognizing that filling the theatre is crucial if we are to continue to play, it has never been our objective simply to fill seats," says Simard. "Our main goal has always been to bring to the stage the authors and the plays we believe in."

Certainly, La Licorne's commitment to serious theatre has earned it a grateful following within Montreal's lively theatre community. "Jean-Denis and Dan- iser devolve a lot of credit for their encour- age ment of young playwrights," says Laberge, a well-known young Quebec writer who rose to fame in her home province when La Licorne produced Nightcap Bar in 1987. "There are not many theatres in this city—or anywhere else for that matter—that are willing to take the risks associated with new au- thors or controversial plays." Adds Marie Paquette, Imperial's public af- fairs coordinator in Montreal, who, along with Jean Clotté, the company's Quebec manager of public affairs, has been an active participant and fund- raiser for the theatre for a number of years: "There's no question La Licorne is a special place for many of the people who are involved in theatre in Quebec."

But aspiring playwrights and actors aren't La Licorne's only fans. A popular student attraction since its early days, the theatre has grown to earn a following among all Montrealers with a taste for thought-provoking work. "In fact," says Simard, "our growing popularity is the main reason we moved to a larger theatre. Increasingly we found ourselves turning away as many people from a performance as we were able to accommodate."

Tonight, as the lights dim and the first act of Laberge's play—about the events that follow the attempted suicide of a young girl—begins, Simard visibly be- gins to relax. And why not? The house is full. The audience is attentive. And the dream has been fulfilled. In 1987 Imperial donated $100,000 to Acadia University in Wolfville, N.S., for the construction of the Esther Clark Wright Archives.

In Wolfville, the old burning Ground lies adjacent to Main Street, under the shadow of the spire of the town's Baptist church. In 1763, it was visited by a band of pioneers from Nova Scotia. From 1763, it chronicles the modern his- toric of the area. Here lie many of the New England settlers who established a colony in the northern American colonies. The original se- xpulsion of the Acadians from their home there by the British in 1755. Here rest 40 members of the DeWolf family, from whom the town of Wolfville took its name. And here sit five small stones marking the tragedy that befell the Ward family during a diaphanous epidemic in 1859. It is also here that one can often find James Doyle Davison on most clement mornings. President of the Wolfville His- torical Society and one of the village's most prolific authors, the 79-year-old Davison is researching his fifth book: the story of the inhabitants of the Old Bury- ing Ground.

Along with the graveyard, there's one other site in Wolfville that's crucial to his current endeavor: Acadia University's Esther Clark Wright Archives. Named after a local historian who graduated from Aca- dia in 1966 and started in a space, it is temperature-controlled, the archives house much of the information needed by the former school guidance counselor. "The archives are like a treasure chest for me," he explains as he makes his way through the dozens of rows of towering bookshelves. "Using church records, the minutes of town meetings and the diaries of pioneers, I can not only find hard facts but the snippets of material that will make my book come alive."

Davison is not the archives only regu- lar. Home to a collection that includes everything from a handwritten copy of the Bible in Micmac, translated by Silas Rand, an erudite 19th-century missionary, to the list of governors' report, dating from 1850, the Esther Clark Wright Archives have attracted amateur and professional histo- rians not only from Nova Scotia but from across North America. "We are particularly well-known for our collection on the Baptist church," says the university's archi- vist, Patricia Ironwold. "The material we have on the arrival of the early settlers from New England, the first Baptists to arrive in Canada, makes the archives an indispensable resource to any scholar doing work on the subject."

A petite woman with a ready smile, Ironwold knows her way around the archives as they were when she first arrived at the university 17 years ago. "At that time the archives consisted of a bunch of boxes held in the northern campus's rare-book room," she says. "No one knew what was there, and because of that, what was there was of little use to any- one. But all that, as James Doyle Davi- son knows, has changed for the better."

"There is such a wealth of material here according to Donata Scott in 1859. It is also here that one can often find James Doyle Davison on most clement mornings. President of the Wolfville His-
NATIVE SON
INSPIRED BY THE SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS OF HIS CREE BAND, TOMSON HIGHWAY’S PLAYS ARE GARNERING THE NATION’S HIGHEST THEATRICAL AWARDS
BY TED FERGUSON

TOMSON HIGHWAY CROSSES THE kitchen of his downtown Toronto home, a sturdy, self-assured man with graceful movements and friendly, dark eyes. He settles at a plain wood table and talks about the Manitoba bush, where he was born in a trapper’s tent. “The summers were magical,” he says, sipping a glass of tap water. “Hundreds of deserted lakes — my family traveled everywhere by canoe. Fishing, trapping. Memories like that are the finest legacy anyone could leave a child.” The wilderness years produced another priceless legacy — an unquestioning belief in the spiritual teachings of his Cree band. When he’s asked about those convictions, Highway retrieves a pen and draws a circle on a sheet of paper. “This is the way the Cree look at life,” he says. “A continuous cycle. A self-rejuvenating force. By comparison, Christian theology is a straight line. Birth, suffering and then the apocalypse.” His eyes brighten as he adds a stick figure to the paper. “The Trickster. The creature in Cree mythology that I identify with the
HUNCHEdOvER THE KITCHEN TABLE.
HIGHWAY BecOMES THOUGHTFUL AND HIS VOICE Acquires A NO TICEABLY RESPECTFUL TONE AS HE SPEAKS OF HIS SPIRITUAL CON Victions.

they'd love to be able to thumb away at their typewriters eight hours a day, five days a week. Not me. I like being with people. I haven't the discipline for that sort of grueling labor.

Disciplined or not, Highway is working on the third play in a projected seven part series dealing with reserve life. Like The Red Sirees and Dry Lips, the new drama will explore the lives of contemporary natives with affectation and humor and reclaim the positive values of Nootka mythology. Hunching over the kitchen table, he long black hair held in a ponytail, Highway becomes thoughtful and his voice acquires a notable respect tone as he speaks of his spiritual convictions. Myths, he says, have been part of Creek culture for thousands of years (the tribe has existed in Canada at least 7,000 years). "Our ancient tales tell us that the North American Indian has a sacred duty to reverence and respect the earth, that the earth is the ultimate creative force," he says. "This circle I've drawn..." It shows how earth replenishes itself through birth and death. The magical cycle. Instead of worshipping a single deity, we worship many spirits, which we believe to be the ultimate force. Another living entity, you know. So you should speak to a tree on the same level that you speak to a human being."

The characters in this play are believed to be messengers from the spirit world. According to Cree teaching they are forever present in the corners of the house. For example, as a hawk, for instance, or a snake or a man or woman. One character, the Trickster, is a half-human, half-fool who uses deceit to teach us about ourselves. This is a story about a man without a woman. When a man without a woman is in love, he says, the story begins with a family of three. First comes the youngest child on the right, then the oldest, who is a 50-year-old man with a 90-year-old woman. This is the story of a man who is never at home, who is always on the move, and whose experience of life is not complete. But, while other narratives remain in different situations joined together, the author was not a dominant role in the Christian theology, Highway says. "I really don't understand that. It leaves half of our civilization out in the cold. Some critics say that my writing is very sympathetic to women. One critic wrote that I know how to get to the core of feminine feelings. That ability may sur pass critics but not me. North American Indian cultures have spiritual values. Masculine energy tends to be more..." But the power without — while female energy is more contained and tamed — the power within.

Talking to Highway, he seems anxious to explain, as though each statement he makes will help create an understanding that will pull together the pieces of his life. Talking to Emily Dickinson, for example, she was a Dane woman at Brochet whose name became the name of Highway. He tells me that he decided to call her Emily Dickey, because difficult words are found in a dictionary.

At the fragile age of six, Highway was coldly upright. As there was no educational institution near the reserve, he, like the other children there, was sent away to Toronto. Twenty years after his death, he was living in his home, which he built even farther from his home. The solitary native among 2,000 upper-middle-class white youths, he was forced to stay in several small homes, an experience on which he won't elaborate. But, while other narratives remain in different situations joined together, the author was not a dominant role in the Christian theology, Highway says. "I really don't understand that. It leaves half of our civilization out in the cold. Some critics say that my writing is very sympathetic to women. One critic wrote that I know how to get to the core of feminine feelings. That ability may surpass critics but not me. North American Indian cultures have spiritual values. Masculine energy tends to be more..." But the power without — while female energy is more contained and tamed — the power within.
sage, it was the sight of native alkalolices on urban streets. "It ripped into my heart every time I walked past a drunk Indian," says Mr. Veney. The reason why I was playing Chopin for middle-class white audiences when these people desperately needed help. Indians are rural-oriented. They only began drifting into cities in large numbers 30 years ago. What they're enduring right now is a lack of adjustment. Eventually they will adapt to urban life but it will take time. What my playing Chopin -- well, it wasn't the answer to their problem.

Highway went to work for various native groups. His diaries took him into prisons, bars and church basement, where he quietly implored natives to take control of their lives and not be victims. He organized films night, bookclub nights, coffee mornings, and job training. As a culture officer for the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation's Indian community secretariat, brought him to the forefront. In the summer of 1961, a Native American named James Menzies' The Donnelles, a trilogy based on a 19th-century Ontario massacre with both poetic language and images that had folkloric connotations. Remembering the impact Menzies' work had on him he started writing scripts, utilizing Cree myths, for two Northern Ontario native theatre groups, Northern Dilettys at Stony Lot and Did-Ro-Jeh-Mo-Jap Theatre on Manitoulin Island.

HIGHWAY WAS AT THE WEST WAYS RESERVE on Manitoulin Island in 1968 when he wrote the Riel, Savio. The inspiration, if it can be termed that, sprang from an unanswerable phone call he made to his family in Hay River. Joe Savio, his cousin who had recently died, had been a close confidant and confidant to him. Because it was Monday night and Monday night was big night on the reserve. Upstairs in a stately home for white men, in bed late at night, creating a fictitious place, Westphal, Manitoba, and developing a plot, drawing on characters and incidents that took place at Brockier reserve (or 'rez,' to use native slang). He finished the twice-at play in only three months. Inspired in large part by a Native American named Joe Savio, and inspired in a small part by a play called The Recluse Sisters, he had staged small collective productions and held workshops designed to develop native writers and performers. The company members were so excited by Highway's manuscript that they made the Recluse Sisters a full-blown presentation. Native Earth's first.

At the stately Royal Alexandra Theatre, the tweed-and-silk-clad invited guests were treated to a special show of native music and dance. The performers and production crew members in the crowd let loose chooese of coyote calls that echoed down the hall. "We really blew the roof off the old building that night," says a smiling Highway. "I talkin' all those Bors -- it's the first time they've finally arived in this country." Poet Daniel Moses of the Native Earth's success...
The changing charms of Chedabucto Bay

A Maritime writer recalls the life and times of a historic stretch of Atlantic coastline

She was once a fishing schooner, and like hundreds of others in this easternmost corner of mainland Nova Scotia, she sailed to Guysborough in the west, Aroostook in the east and Canso in the southeast. Back when those ports still knew the whistles of steam ferries and the flutter of luffing sails, she roamed all of Chedabucto Bay. Now she’s a pile of grey planks and ribs and rusty boat nails.

To find her you must know where to look. You take the road to the gravel beach at Port Shoreham, where the surf sucks a billion smooth stones, and then walk easterly for half a kilometre. Just beyond the ridge of seaweed that marks high water, a bayside meadow opens a hole among the fir, and that’s where you’ll see her bones.

I’ve monitored the shrinking of her remains. I’ve visited them off and on for 43 years. In August 1946, when I was 12, I found her. She looked shipshape and ready to go, but she would never sail again. Was her owner tired of being the skipper of the bay’s last schooner?

People called him “Doc.” He lived in a shack beside his vessel and smelled as though he’d been embalmed in brine, rum, tar, tobacco juice, his own sweat and sinister doings. There was something wrong with one of his eyes and some of his fingers, and though he may have been as old as I am now (55), I thought he was ancient enough, and certainly evil enough, to have slit throats for Blackbeard. But what did I know? I was just a kid from Toronto whose father had sent him “down home” for the summer.

No one lives near the beach now, and for months at a time no vessel moves on our stretch of Chedabucto Bay. Our older neighbors say big schools of fish abruptly stopped coming into these waters decades ago. They don’t know why. Long after that, local men continued to look after their boats, tend their nets and masts and gals in their weathered shacks. They did those things for the love of them. But the men who worked the upper bay have just about all died, or moved away, and when good wages to the west made local farming seem a mean way to live, the men who worked the land dwindled away too. Often the fishermen and farmers were the same men.

Towns, too, are shrinking. The population of Canso, at the gateway to our bay, has dropped from 1,575 in the 1950s to 1,285 today. And Guysborough, which lies at the top of our bay, had 1,600 residents in the 1920s but now has a mere 500. These, remember, are our big towns.

Nowadays, few historic events are more thinly populated than the great “V” that defines Chedabucto Bay.

HISTORIC? ONE THEORY HAS IT THAT HENRY Sinclair, a Scottish prince, sailed up Chedabucto Bay a century before Columbus “discovered” America and spent a year wandering around Nova Scotia, so impressing the Micmacs that they gave him word-of-mouth immortality; for generations he has survived in their legends as the demigod Glooscap.

The story has it that Sinclair sailed right past the site of the old Bruce farmhouse, in which my wife, Penni, and I now live, and before continuing inland, he supposedly climbed the highest hill on the far shore. From this house, in which
my father, Charles Bruce, was born, we can see the hill 13 kilometers to the south, beyond the whole sweep of the great Bay. My father’s poet and once wrote:

**The opposite shore was low and far, and in a misty dawn.**

**With Asian darkness. Nothing known. No shore.**

**Of wind or tide could reach the coast north.**

**Of that distant country under sleeping cloud.**

Our bay would certainly have given Sankoku a new basis for its claims on mainland Nova Scotia. It is an epic among brothers, like the giant inlets of Newfoundland. It is a huge reservoir of the ocean, running 32 kilometers from Isle Madame in southern Cape Breton all the way up to the tricky, skinny gut of Guysborough Bay.

**The southern shore, “that distant country” we see every clear day of our lives, is a wooded seacoast cliff that runs for 40 kilometers “like a gigantic body” from Cape Breton east from the head of the bay clear out to Canso. We can make out a few houses among the pines and a couple of a white church, like the one Dylan Thomas called “the sea wet church the size of a small hill.” On a clear November day, when the morning air smells of tomorrow’s ice and the scarlet and yellow of the hardwoods explode against the dark wall of fir at the foot of our pasture, the pond down through the river looks black in the golden light. Beyond that, a sotswallowfly, left over from summer, pushes whitecaps across the royal blue of the bay, and there’s nothing at all dim about that far country. It looks so close you feel you could almost pinch the wet church between your fingers.

In winter, however, you can’t even see the church among the patches of snow and charcoal shadows of scrappy spruce, in part at Canso Harbour, Lake Port Medway hoist, but might as well be on a distant Arctic bay. Some years spring fills our bay with so much ice you think you could walk right across. You couldn’t. On at least one evening every summer an amazing double rainbow bridges the entire bay. The kids come down near door ruts under the lines of blowing, forgotten laundry, and they squelch and shout and point once more at the miracle in the sky. The shape of Chedabucto Bay never changes; its mood never stops changing.

**The far shore defines a fault, and it was on this fracture that geological pressures shaved all southern Nova Scotia’s coastline into a place where 250 million years of erosion and wind have to set it afloat.** The fort surrendered, and with a drum beating and a fire at their side, a handful of French soldiers marched with marked noses.

**Their defence had been so courageous that Frontenac himself praised their commander, Dauphin de Montgrollon.**

When in 1629, when the Spanish privateer “la Trinidad,” a new Basque fishing captain named Suelset, that was in 1607. That year England founded their first settlement on the American mainland, at Jamestown, Virginia. By then Suelset had already made no fewer than 84 transatlantic voyages.

**No one knows French fishermen of their time knew our bay, but the Micmacs loved it and named it; “Sodanka” means “a wet and smelly place,” a true route to a bay of years no other place in North America approached it in importance,” wrote the local historian A.C. Jost, “and during some of them, it returned the only profit which England received on her colonial enterprises in the New World.”

**HISTORIC! WHEN NEW ENGLANDERSثورred in 1745 to capture Fort Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island they chose Canso as their place of rendezvous. Ninety ships and 4,300 men gathered there on the shore and then took further France by sneaking up on the supposedly invincible French fighting power in the New World and seizing it.**

**When the American Revolution broke out in 1776, John Paul Jones, one of the most famous captains in naval history, was granted land near Guysborough in 1780. He went home to Scotland and married the beautiful “Miss MacDonald” and brought her back to Nova Scotia, but when their ship reached Guysborough she died. Meanwhile, his closest friend, a Fraser, had also died at Guysborough. Cummings headed home for Scotland but changed his mind at Halifax, returned to the land of Chedabucto Bay, here from other parts of the country.”

Chedabucto Bay turned the descendants of soldiers into sailors, fishermen, boatbuilders and international traders.

Clam Harbour is so small now it’s hard to imagine anything bigger than great blue herons messing about in it. Nothing but the water as we approach the shore. Nothing but the old Captain Will Bruce went to work in Boston in the 1880s. His wife, Sarah, brought their daughters back home every July that she and Will could pay for the trip. Moreover, French fishermen used to come over for the summer when Shakespeare was a boy, and baked it from their boats. By then his “Micmac canoes sped westward from Cape Breton, under the double rainbow above Chedabucto Bay.”
THE WAY WE WERE

An afternoon in Imperial's archives stirs pleasant memories of the past • BY PAUL MILLER

NOW AND THEN ON SNOWY WINTER AFTERNOONS I ALLOW MYSELF TO indulge in one of my favorite pastimes. I pull out one or more of the cartons that store treasures from my past and settle down in a quiet corner to take what can only be described as a sentimental journey. It should come then, as no surprise that when I was recently invited to spend an afternoon in the corporate archives of Imperial Oil I viewed the opportunity with almost immoderate enthusiasm. Established in 1930 with a mandate to acquire material that is of permanent value to the corporation, the archives enable visitors to review—and relive—the company's history. To those who, now and then, enjoy a moment of nostalgia, the Imperial archives are a paradise: a quiet room filled with hundreds of thousands of documents, photos and artifacts, itemized and stored in cases and cartons and canisters, each holding memories of the past.

As I glance around the room I notice, in a display case, a large steel microphone. It is the very one that Foster Hewitt used for his Hockey Night in Canada broadcasts during the 1930s. Solid and stainless, it seems impossibly heavy in this age of tie-tack miniaturization. I heft it to my ear to listen for echoes of that reedy tenor voice, crackling through the deep winter air, holding a nation on the edge of its seat as Montreal Canadien Howie Morenz thunders down the ice toward Lorne Chabot, crouched over in the Toronto Maple Leafs net.

But the 1930s represent the modern era in this collection. One cabinet contains the original charter of the company, dated September 8, 1886, painstakingly restored and pressed between sheets of paper. On a nearby wall is an enlargement of the front page of the Saturday Globe of June 24, 1919. There is a feature headlined "Petroleum (sic) and the oil industry through the camera." A photograph shows an imposing industrial panorama, not at all reminiscent of the small, quiet town I remember driving through on excursions from my home in Chatham, Ont. It is a vivid reminder that there was a time when the oil reserves and attendant refineries of southwestern Ontario met most of Canada's requirements for petroleum and its products.

On a nearby shelf I notice a number of those early products. They bear sturdy names like Polarete Motor Oil, Arctic Cup Grease, Mica Axle Grease, Excel- sior Cheese Coating and Eureka Harness Oil (with its faithful companion, the Eureka Harness Oiler, "indispensable as a savior of labor and money"). Like friendly beacons, they draw me to a simpler time, before the spread of electricity, when petroleum was bullion supplanting whale oil as a major source of household illumination. And what better weapon for taking on the Nantucket whalers than this Rayo Lamp, pictured in a yellowed Imperial catalogue from the 1920s? The lamp was on the cutting edge of kerosene technology; the entry reminds consumers that "for sewing, for reading and for all work requiring close application of the eyes, authorities agree that a good kerosene oil lamp affords the best artificial light."

Most of the household products pictured in the informative catalogue, like the colorful decorative candles and the Rayo lamp itself, belong to the company's past, but as I turn the brittle pages I recognize a few items that have endured the changing times—how many Canadian kitchens, for example, even today, don't have a box of Parowax preserving wax tucked away in a cupboard?

As I look through a cardboard carton of old photographs I am once again reminded of the power and freedom that petroleum and the automobile suddenly brought people in the early part of the century. In a matter of a few years a jour-
F ew painters have been able to evoke the loneliness and desola-
tion of the Canadian prairie in winter with the poignancy of
William Kurelek, whose painting “The Section Foreman’s Wife” is reproduced on
the cover of this issue. It was acquired by Imperial Oil in 1979 and now forms part
of the company’s growing collection of Cana-
dian art.
Kurelek painted “The Section Fore-
man’s Wife” in 1966 as part of a series
of works he called “farm paintings.” The
theme of this series, reflecting both Kure-
lek’s own background (he was born on a
farm near Whitford, Alta., in 1927) and his
Ukrainian heritage, is “The Ukrainian
woman pioneer in Canada.”
The concept for the suite, Kurelek was to
write later, “did not emerge gradually but all in one evening.” In the autumn of 1953
three executive members of the Associa-
tion of Ukrainian Women of Canada met
me at (a preregistered meeting … and
asked me to do a series of paintings on their
group’s history, similar to the one I had
done on my father.”
Kurelek decided to dedicate his new se-
ries to his mother. In 20 paintings executed
over a dozen or so years, he illustrated
Ukrainian immigration in Canada from its
beginnings in 1890 to the modern day, in-
cluding the course of his research “old-timers who had lived through that
whole period of Western development.”
Of the subject “The Section Foreman’s
Wife” Kurelek wrote: “She is a much for-
gotten pioneer whom I vowed not to forget
because of the necessarily lonely life she is
compelled to live. She has to cook, laun-
dry, keep the fire going to ward off the
screaming cold of the north country and gen-
eration making a home for her husband to
return to of evenings. If she had no children
of pre-school age there was no one to talk
to all day.”

Review and other company publications.
Although relatively few of these works
were to find their way into Imperial’s per-
sonal collection, the projects themselves
served to develop an awareness within
Imperial of the need for art sponsorship.
In 1952 the company purchased the C. W.
Jefferys Historical Collection of 1,000
paintings and drawings. The collection
was subsequently donated to the National
Archives of Canada on the occasion of its
100th anniversary in 1972.
A formal decision to develop a perma-
nent collection of Canadian art, with the
idea of fostering public awareness of the
visual arts and of supporting the Cana-
dian art community, was taken in 1965. Its beginnings were deliber-
ately modest and its expansion gradual: 10
years later the collection numbered less
than 130 pieces. Even so, by the 1970s
Imperial’s art collection was frequently
on the road, touring communities across the
country.
The encouragement of rising artistic
talents was a specific objective of the initial
acquisitions for the collection. However,
this was decided at the outset that the collec-
tion should not be confined to up-and-
comers but that in the interests of a bal-
anced collection promise should be offset
by maturity. The same criteria hold true
today, a strong historical theme underlies
the purchase of works by established
and recognized masters, while the works ac-
quired from younger artists tend to have
contemporary themes and reflect the artis-
t’s evolving styles.
In recent years the primary purpose of the collection has become that of the
employees’ work environment. Today
virtually every piece in Imperial’s collec-
tion, which numbers nearly 6,000 items
and includes sculpture and prints as well as
the growing collection of glass works, is
displayed in the workplace.
In 1979 Imperial, newly formed subsidi-
ary, Esso Resources Canada Limited, ini-
tiated a new collection of Canadian art for
its Calgary offices. Two art specialists
were commissioned to travel the length and
breadth of Canada, one with a special
mandate to focus on emerging artists. The
result was a first sale for a number of them.
Today, the Calgary Venet Film Festival, incor-
norates 1,600 works of art — including pottery and wall hangings — by more than 600 Cana-
dian artists. — Wayne Thomas