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Gulf. She and her husband worked in the oilpatch in the 1990s, and spent four years in Oman along with their two young sons. Macaulay remembers how the expat community leapt in to ensure she and her family were comfortable and taken care of. And she remembers how the local Arabs offered them a brand of hospitality she’d never known. “I learned a thing or two about being welcomed,” she says. “It was fabulous the way we were tolerated, even when we really mucked up and offended people.” Her return to Calgary four years later was difficult. Looking for the same connection she had experienced in Oman, she joined her community association in Brentwood and has been a member ever since. “We need each other, and we need to build communities that will support each other.”

Today, in addition to her roles as artist and mom, Macaulay handles CivicCamp’s e-mail and helped manage Dru Farrell’s re-election campaign. This sort of all-day engagement is typical of the Campers, many of whom sit on community-association boards and worked on candidates’ campaigns (some were even candidates themselves). When a social gathering called CivicCamp Connect was planned last month, few members showed up. They were so busy they simply didn’t have the time to attend their own event.

The truant Campers have no one to answer to, however. CivicCamp has no official leadership. There is a core group of individuals who consider themselves the Camp’s founders, and there are organizers like Macaulay who tend the website, [civiccamp.org](http://civiccamp.org), but there are no officers or directors. “We don’t want it to be someone’s baby,” she says. “Nobody is in charge. That makes it messy as all get out.”

This messiness is deliberate. CivicCamp was designed to be free from the binds of both ideology and hierarchy in the hope it would evolve in a spontaneous, organic way. Its fluidity has already led to some surprises, with the “Race City question” being chief among them. During the opening salvos of the municipal-election campaign, CivicCampers grew frustrated that many of the issues they wanted discussed were being ignored. They decided to call on citizens to propose questions they wanted answered by the candidates. A list of 134 questions was formulated and CivicCamp organizers invited visitors to go to [civiccamp.org](http://civiccamp.org) and vote on the ones that were most important to them. The 10 most popular would be posed to each candidate at the ward forums that CivicCamp was helping organize. In the survey’s final 72 hours, a question about a leasing agreement for Race City Speedway appeared and rocketed to the top of the poll. (Interestingly, nobody asked a single question about snow removal or the Peace Bridge). Even though organizers could tell a group representing Race City had roused its supporters to push the question forward, CivicCamp let the question stand, and every mayoral and aldermanic candidate answered it. Macaulay considers the experience a lesson in democracy that proves, again, that “decisions are made by people who show up.” A vibrant city, this ungroup maintains, requires more from its citizens than standing in a voting booth every three years. Calgarians need to engage. They need to realize they are not merely consumers of policy. They need to actively participate in forming it. Macaulay cringes at the suggestion that City Hall and industry—especially the development industry—are the sole stakeholders of city planning. “We live here,” Macaulay says. “Aren’t we the biggest group of stakeholders?”

CivicCampers feel rather buoyant these days. They consider the passing of Plan It (albeit a watered-down version) to be an early victory and one with the potential, if not the promise, to make sweeping change. Calgary’s post-boom demographic also inspires optimism. The city is young, affluent and educated, and more ethnically diverse than at any time in its history. More and more Calgarians are standing up to engage in the building of their city, with the Oct. 18 election a prime example of people-powered change. And thanks, in part, to CivicCamp, Calgarians seem to be paying attention.

Macaulay’s vision of CivicCamp has changed since its founding in 2009. At first she saw the group as a means to gather a critical mass of value-sharing individuals whose strength in numbers could sway policy. “I used to believe that if we bring enough of us together we will have a strong voice,” she says. “(But) we don’t get anywhere if we just pile more and more like-minded people onto our side of the seesaw.” Today she sees CivicCamp as a safe place for citizens to interact with each other, to share ideas, and to engage with the system. “I think we have to find a way to have a much better conversation. This is where we will shine.” ☺

THIRTY-THREE

**TUNED IN**  
David Ward's CD of the week

Artist: **Dana Wylie**  
CD: **Something's Going To Happen Here**

Another fine Alberta songwriter's album, *Something's Going To Happen Here*, opens with the unaccompanied rich and confident voice of Dana Wylie:

Sorry baby, I gotta go  
Don't ask me 'cause I don't know  
I might not be on my way home  
But I can't stay here

Thirty seconds later she's joined by the big bass sounds of Nye Parsons, and a journey begins that winds its way through her melodic thoughts and astute observations about advice ("Make The First Move"), confession ("The Stupid Things I Do"), character studies ("Gone For Good"), and, for good measure, a song about our canine pals ("Black Stray Dog").

Although it's Wylie's voice which always draws me in, it doesn't hurt that she has the backing of some of Alberta's finer musicians. They seem to know exactly what to play in order to allow her songs to breathe comfortably and, while I'm at it, hats off to producer/guitarist Matthew Ord for making them all sound so pleasant!

Host of *The Afternoon Edition* on CKUA  
**WEEKDAYS 3-6 PM**

Every weekday afternoon CKUA's Calgary studio gets filled up and somewhat cluttered with CDs, magazines, newspapers, notebooks, and the various cables connecting David Ward's laptop music library into the grid that is Alberta's CKUA Radio Network. For more than 40 years, he has been digging the wide world of music from Johnny Cash to Steve Ray Vaughan, Louis Armstrong to Radiohead, and Joni Mitchell to Beethoven. A lifetime of listening experience provides the foundation for the three-hour musical journey that begins weekdays at 3 p.m. on CKUA's *Afternoon Edition*, 93.7 FM Calgary.

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