

The Line: Documentary Research Creation and an Ethics of Care

by

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Abstract

What are the effects of a workplace based on an ethics of care? This paper takes into account major theorizing on the subject and applies it to a company called Quality One Training and Support, Inc., or Q1 for short.

Q1 is contracted by the City of Edmonton to carry out the monumental task of sorting Edmontonians' trash. Q1 hires people with barriers to employment, such as criminal records, histories of addiction, new immigrant status, and disabilities of various kinds. The result is a diverse workforce of difficult-to-employ people doing the important work of reducing a city's waste. Q1's workplace culture, guided by an ethics of care, is the subject of my analysis, which takes the form of a documentary film and this companion paper. This paper explores the ethics of care in action. While the effects of Q1's ethics are difficult to quantify, their efforts create a network of care that offers employees the benefits of a healthy community.

Preface

5:55 a.m.

Cinching a thick coat high against the pinpricks of quick snow, Aron leaves his second storey walk-up. He locks the deadbolt, sinks keys into pocket, pushes his hands into gloves too thin for this weather, and clasps his fingers at the webbing for a snug fit. The wind almost whistles in the leafless branches above as Aron, bracing against it, walks, still waking up to the still dark day.

This far north, the day won't break for a few hours, but the black sky is brightened by the upward spill of city light. It's brighter still from the millions of twinkling spires on refinery row—Edmonton's tiara. Two busses, thirty-five minutes, and several hundred steps later, Aron and his co-workers arrive at the place alluded to on the bus' banner: Waste Management Ctr.

Through icy wisps they approach one of the biggest steel buildings on the planet, with a footprint of 18,000 square metres and 40 feet tall. It's perched next to an even bigger edifice, the now defunct composter, on the northeastern cusp of a place that used to call itself the City of Champions.

The here of our story is Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: a city named after a fur trading fort named after a London borough that was the birthplace of a Lord who'd never been here. In 1905 it became the capital of Alberta, a province named after an English princess who had also never been here. Canada, founded on the problematic Doctrine of Discovery, got its name from the Huron-Iroquois word for "village," which was misinterpreted to mean the whole land by settler-colonialists who, up until then, had never been here.

6:22 a.m.

The whipping wind muffles to a mute as they enter the fire door on the side of the building and climb the three storeys to the Skybridge. Here, windows overlook the massive tipping floor below, offering a glimpse of what the day holds for them. Huge machines with animal names like Caterpillar,

Bobcat, and Grizzly rest dormant next to mountains of multicoloured trash, most of it plastic. When the machines come to life the whole works resembles a diesel-powered ballet.

Aron and his colleagues pass another viewing deck, through a concrete corridor that doubles as a tornado shelter, more stairs, and more corridor to the big staff room, where they put on a pot of coffee and get ready for the day. There are a few minutes yet til the morning meeting begins, and the mood is one of calm anticipation. A few of the twenty-odd people make peanut butter and jam toast, and the bubbling of the percolator punctuates the low murmur of conversation. Everyone's in blue coveralls with reflective X's across the chest and back. Reflective leg cuffs over steel-toed boots, with gloves, goggles, hard hats, and N95 respirators at the ready.

The demography of the room is anything but uniform. There are more men than women and more Indigenous than not, but there are immigrants from around the world, and the ages range from 18 to 63. They've got a map on the far wall with bright coloured pushpins clustered on every continent, each one indicating a staff member's birthplace. Aron ties a bandana over his braided black hair and sips his coffee.

In 2011 I took a free public tour of the EWMC's marvels. I was surprised to learn many things: that our city had a waste-to-biofuels plant, that they recycled electronics on-site, that they had an aerobic and anaerobic composter, and that the former was housed in one of the biggest buildings in the world. The thing that struck me most, though, was the workplace culture I witnessed along the way. In the sort rooms, where all of Edmonton's municipal solid waste comes to be sorted by hand and diverted into the various waste streams so that less of it ends up as landfill, the people seemed... happy. Pop music bounced in the speaker, loud enough for folks to hear it through their earplugs. Some of the sorters were dancing.

As our tour group meandered down the Skybridge, oohing and ahing at the bustlings below, a muscular, heavily-tattooed man walked toward us. He was wearing blue coveralls and carrying a white hard hat adorned with stickers. Kathy, the woman leading that part of the tour, and one of the facility's head honchos, brightened at the sight of him.

"Hey everyone, this is Stacey," she said. "He's our new lead hand."

We said hello and he nodded “hey,” appearing a little downtrodden. Sensing this, Kathy tactfully paused the tour, led him aside, and they chatted for a little while. Their conversation ended in a hug and Stacey went on his way, Kathy returning to the group to commence the tour.

I was curious, so I asked her what happened with Stacey and she said, “He’s feeling a bit alienated from his co-workers. He was just promoted to a lead hand position, so now he’s got to lead people he used to work alongside.” I accepted that and left it there and on we toured, but several things stuck out to me.

- (1) that she sensed something was wrong with him emotionally,
- (2) that she decided to pause the tour and talk to him about it in semi-private,
- (3) that he could talk openly about his problem,
- (4) that the conversation ended with a hug, and
- (5) that she was open with me about it.

At the end of the tour, as we were getting ready to leave, Stacey came back to our group, apparently in a better mood.

“Hey guys, sorry to interrupt,” he said. “I want to tell you why I’ll never quit this job.”

We quieted.

“When I came in for an interview, it was the first time in a long time that somebody looked at me and didn’t see a criminal, but saw a man.”

Acknowledgments

In a movie this would be the credits scene, and it would come at the end. My thesis would not have been possible were it not for the academic, philosophical, and emotional support of my supervisor, Michelle Meagher, who guided and encourage me on this long and winding adventure. I am grateful to the Department of Women's & Gender Studies for supporting my work, especially Felice Lifshitz even as it went longer than expected. Thank you for allowing me to do this research and make this film. Thank you for guiding my academic, artistic, and ethical development.

I am forever indebted to my core creative team: my best friend and editor Robert Latte, producer and enthusiastic problem-solver Kennedy Quigley, cinematographer-with-a-poet's-touch Gerardo Ramos, and soundpal with a great ear Tomáš Andel. To the film's composer, responsible for so much of the emotional power of the film, Alan Wilson. Thank you to Canadian filmmaking legend Nettie Wild for being our mentor on this project. My partner in life and collaboration, Kaitlynd Hiller: you are a great editor because you are a great writer. Your care means everything. Thanks to my family, who have supported me intellectually and emotionally the whole way.

This work would be far more stupid and boring were it not for the fascinating histories by Russell Cobb, Susan Strasser, and Heather Rogers. Their books were good journalism and sparkling prose. My knowledge of our current waste context comes mostly from them.

I am especially grateful to Quality One for letting me study their community. Even though I and my crewmates were often hiding behind equipment, Gerardo, Tom and I felt like part of the family.

Thank you for reading.

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List of Abbreviations

Q1: Quality One Training & Support, Inc. This company is the subject of my research. “Q1” is how people within and around the company refer to it.

EWMC: Edmonton Waste Management Centre (pictured below). This is where our story takes place.

IPTF: the Integrated Processing & Transfer Facility, the specific building where Q1 staff sort Edmontonians’ waste into different waste streams (recyclers, biofuel plant, composter, hazardous waste facility, landfill).

EoC: the Ethics of Care, the predominant moral theory referenced throughout.

Map of EWMC



1. Gate/weighing stations
2. IPTF
3. Aerobic digester (defunct)
4. Anaerobic digester
5. Residential transfer station
6. MRF (Materials Recovery Facility)
7. E-waste recycling facility
8. Clover Bar Landfill (closed)
9. Biosolids lagoons
10. Construction & demolition waste recycler
11. Compost curing facility
12. Waste-to-biofuels plant (Enerkem)
13. Research facilities
14. Administration/education building

Come west, young man,
to a city that I grew up in
but don't recognize anymore, because
building cranes are straining for a sky that keeps getting higher and higher
because it's ringed by refineries
like teen beauty queen tiaras
that wink and glitter
spilling sprawl into the night.

~from **Come West, Young Man** by Kathryn Lennon

Atlas by UA Fanthorpe

There is a kind of love called maintenance
Which stores the WD40 and knows when to use it;

Which checks the insurance, and doesn't forget
The milkman; which remembers to plant bulbs;

Which answers letters; which knows the way
The money goes; which deals with dentists

And Road Fund Tax and meeting trains,
And postcards to the lonely; which upholds

The permanently rickety elaborate
Structures of living, which is Atlas.

And maintenance is the sensible side of love,
Which knows what time and weather are doing
To my brickwork; insulates my faulty wiring;
Laughs at my dryrotten jokes; remembers
My need for gloss and grouting; which keeps
My suspect edifice upright in air,
As Atlas did the sky.

Chapter 1: The Project

1.1 - Study Overview

This documentary research creation project centers around the question what are the effects of an ethics of care? What is EoC? How is it put into practise? How does it affect the ones who are cared for? How does it play out for the carer? Are these roles distinct? What are the strengths and limitations of an EoC in the workplace, exemplified by Q1?

The EoC is a normative moral philosophy developed by feminist thinkers in the late-twentieth century. While I refer to it in shorthand, it is by no means a simple or settled moral philosophy. Like any established theory, much has been written about the EoC, and there are many critiques of it, many coming from within the field. In my reading I have only scraped the surface of EoC philosophy, but I outline the main concepts and canonical texts in chapter 2.2. In chapter 4.3 I discuss documentary ethics, and how those applied in the filmmaking process, and how they were influenced by an EoC.

The goal of my research was to document and analyse the workplace culture of Q1. My methodology, guided by an EoC lens, was a filmed observation of Q1 staff that I edited into a documentary. I filmed people at work in the IPTF sorting waste on “the line.” I filmed them cleaning the facility, smoking outside, attending morning meetings, in transit to and from work, and in their homes. I conducted a dozen in-depth interviews and filmed their annual staff Christmas party. The documentary film, supplemented by this paper, provides a qualitative study of EoC in the workplace. In chapter 4.2 I discuss my research methodology further, providing reflections on the process.

1.2 - Why the Ethics of Care?

In chapter 2 I argue that the EoC offers a more comprehensive understanding and approach to moral decision-making than do traditional moral philosophies. This is because it is based on a more accurate understanding of the world, where things are interconnected and the distinction between self and other is not absolute. This doesn't mean that the EoC offers simpler solutions to moral problems, but rather the opposite: morality is context-dependent and cannot be decided according to a universally applicable set of rules. It's complicated.

In traditional moral philosophies like Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, and justice theory, moral agents are distinct entities and the seat of moral authority rests in the individual's will. In the EoC, moral agents are embedded in a web of relations with other moral agents, and even non-actors like trees. The EoC claims that morality is not determined by the goodness or badness of an action, or the virtue or vice of the actor, or the effects of the action, but rather incorporates all three in a matrix of relations between things.

Carol Gilligan is the pre-eminent EoC theorist, and according to her model, the highest stage of moral development is marked by a recognition of the interdependence of self and the other. The EoC foregrounds the reality of interconnectedness and encourages people to care for one another. In this way, EoC reflects reality more accurately than other normative theories while still making a normative claim that we ought to strive toward an ideal of caring relationships.

While much has been theorized about the EoC, few real-world examples are cited in the literature, aside from psychological studies. I hope that my documentary research of Q1, a company guided by an EoC, will provide one such real-world example. It's not a perfect model of the EoC but an instance of an EoC. And they're largely successful; Q1 is a socially responsible, financially stable company doing important ecological work. But they also fail in ways I discuss in chapter 4.3. By showing, on film, the rich community that has been built by, for, and with some of the most marginalized people in our society, I hope that this documentary research can stimulate change toward a more caring world.

Chapter 2: The Framework

2.1 - Introduction

While the concept of an EoC can be read into earlier writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Milton Mayeroff, it was first explicated by Carol Gilligan in her book *In a Different Voice*. It was then expanded upon by many others, most notably Nel Noddings, Virginia Held, Barbara Herman, and Joan C. Tronto.

EoC is a normative moral theory that emphasizes the importance of care as an act, a virtue, a feeling, and a relationship. An EoC resists the label of "theory" because it isn't as prescriptive as others, which typically aim to distil moral decision-making into a set of objective and universally applicable rules. Care is rather a practise, not a set of rules, and morality is a negotiation between actors, actors embedded in a network of care, actors who are often unequal. The EoC emphasizes the importance of relationships, making the normative claim that relationships should be caring ones in order to be ethical. This includes caring for the well-being of the other as well as for the self, and to acknowledge that they are not distinct.

2.2 - The Ethics of Care

Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* was a critical response to the moral psychology popularized by Lawrence Kohlberg in the 1970s. Kohlberg's scale of moral reasoning was based on a study of 72 individuals over 20 years, and from it he deduced three phases of moral development: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. At the pre-conventional level, our moral code is shaped by physical consequence and external authority. We are good because we fear the consequences of being bad. Phase two, conventional morality, is where we internalize the moral standards of valued adult role models and accept that moral rules aren't universal. We are good for the good of everyone. Phase three is post-conventional morality, which Kohlberg asserted only 15% of the population have the abstract reasoning required to arrive at. It is marked by a self-chosen morality based on individual rights and justice, according

to Kohlberg. We are good because we understand the dominant moral rules in society, synthesize them with our own personal moral codes, and apply them flexibly.

Gilligan and others have pointed out several problems with Kohlberg's conclusions, chief among them is that his study was done with exclusively male participants. Gilligan, a student of Kohlberg at the time, set out to conduct similar studies on male and female participants, and found that the males tended to follow Kohlberg's phases of moral development, but that the females didn't. Her female participants advanced from a morality fearful of punishment to one influenced by the needs of others, they didn't always advance to Kohlberg's final post-conventional phase. Instead of practising a nuanced morality based on a set of self-chosen rules, Gilligan found that women did this sometimes, but also made decisions that reflected Kohlberg's second phase, where morality is based on the needs of others. Instead of framing it as evidence that women aren't as morally mature as men, Gilligan argued that women's morality tended to be more context-dependent than ruled by rules.

Women's responses to the moral problems in Gilligan's studies were much more sensitive to context-specific features and relationships, especially dynamics of inequality, as between caregiver and cared-for. Gilligan distinguishes EoC from an ethics of justice because justice is too abstract. Gilligan's studies, culminating in her seminal book, "offered empirical evidence that undercuts standard assumptions about moral autonomy, moral principles, and the universality of moral doctrines."

Informed by Gilligan's work, Nel Noddings added to the conversation a few years later. She started from the presumption that women see morality differently than men do: "[o]ne might say that ethics has largely been discussed in the language of the father: in principles and propositions, in terms such as justification, fairness, justice. The mother's voice has been silent." Noddings describes the EoC as a feminine ethics that prefers face-to-face moral deliberation that occurs in real time, with appreciation of the uniqueness of each caring relationship. She located the origin of ethical action in two motives: the affective response, which is a natural caring sentiment, and the memory of being cared for, which established care as an ideal in the first place. Like Gilligan, Noddings thinks that care is a more foundational virtue than justice because we all relate to it.

Barbara Herman uses the concept of trust to illustrate morality's relational nature. What virtues must individuals possess for trust to be present, she asks? Willingness or courage, perhaps, on the part of the truster, and trustworthi-

ness on the part of the trusted. This does not, however, capture what trust is. Herman says trust is a relationship, a social contract, usually unspoken, and not a virtue one possesses objectively.

Later came Virginia Held's book *The Ethics of Care*, which takes into account the theorizing that came before her, incorporates major critiques of it, and provides a synthesis that strengthens the EoC as a framework for understanding and directing morality. Held agrees that morality is relational, and that the moral worth of an action lies not in the intent or virtue of the actors, nor the effects of an action, but in both those things and also in the relationship between people.

Held agrees with Kant and Rawls and other deontologists that the will directs moral action, and that the miracle of sentience means that it is imperative to act according to maxims whereby we can will that they should become universal laws. Instead of placing the seat of moral authority in the individual, the EoC places it in the relationship between agents. The ethics of care, says Held,

tells us to value caring relationships, to respond to need with sensitivity, empathy, and effectiveness. To build relations of trust and mutuality. To interact nonviolently, and to take responsibility, as appropriate, for providing needed care.

The relationships that Held refers to are not limited to the relationships between moral actors. They also extend to non-actors and actors with different capacities, like persons with disabilities, children, animals, and ecosystems.

A critique often made of the EoC is that it is essentialist. By saying that men and women differ in their moral philosophies of justice and care, respectively, Gilligan is framing her philosophy in a gender binary, which is a simplistic description of the world; it's a material fact that people don't fit cleanly into one gender or the other. I think the solution to the gender essentialism of past EoC theorists is to forgive it pay attention to what their theorizing has to offer, and then come up with our own philosophy. Morality is a negotiation, after all, and it isn't done in a vacuum.

In Gilligan's studies, women tended to favour an ethics of care, but not always. A female-identifying cop may prioritize a principle of justice over care just as a male-identifying prostitute may prioritize care over justice; it's contextual. The observation that men and women demonstrate different moral reasoning is a description of what people tended to do in particular studies, not what men and women always do.

Joan C. Tronto, in her book *Caring Democracy*, also pushes back against the essentialist claims of the EoC. She accepts that most care work is done by women (nursing, childcare, counselling), but does not interpret that to mean that women are intrinsically more caring. Instead she shows the ways in which women and men are socially constructed to embody roles with different ethics and values attached. Women are trained to exhibit care ethics and men encouraged to exhibit a work ethic and an ethics of justice. Men get a pass, she says, from having to “take, or to think much about, the responsibilities for the caring tasks assigned to women.”

Nel Noddings illustrated the limitations of an EoC by sketching a model of concentric circles of obligation. In our innermost circle are usually our closest family and friends, and in the next, bigger circle are our more distant family and friends, and in the next are our neighbours, co-workers, and so on. The obligation to care is strongest near the center, especially toward those who are capable of a reciprocal relationship. Noddings conceives of the caring obligation as moving outward in concentric circles to increasingly distant others, and this is characterized by a diminished ability for a caring relationship. This prompted her to speculate that it is impossible to care for everyone, though in later work she advocated trying to.

2.3 - Methodology 1: Project Design

Beginning in the late summer of 2019, I embarked on filming a documentary about Q1 and its staff. I wanted to highlight the importance of their work from an ecological perspective and, more importantly, from a social one. I aimed to document a workplace guided by an EoC, and I tried to employ an EoC in the filmmaking process, caring for my crewmates and documentary subjects as best I could. In preparation for filming our documentary, the crew and I (a handful of friends, named in the “Acknowledgements” section) met regularly over a potluck dinner to discuss the film’s aesthetics, ethics, and practicalities. We visited the EWMC long before filming, and worked to establish relationships with the Q1 staff.

Documentarian Werner Herzog famously said that “filmmaking is athletic, not aesthetic,” meaning that during the actual filming process, there isn’t much room for intellectual deliberation. For example: while I wrote out lists of questions for each person I interviewed, the conversation naturally inspired questions I couldn’t have thought of beforehand. An EoC approach to filmmaking was helpful because it reminded me to be sensitive, to pay attention, to care for whom I was filming. More methodology in chapter 4.

Chapter 3: The Context

3.1 - The Early Years

This chapter traces a history of waste management in Edmonton. I begin with a broad look at the category of trash and discuss how it has changed over time. I then provide a history of Edmonton's waste management practises, paying special attention to the wider global context. What motivated Edmonton's changing methods? How were they the same as or different from the common practises of the day? Why did we invest so heavily in the EWMC in the 90s? What does our current garbage situation look like and why? How did Edmonton become a world leader in waste management, and what precipitated our fall from grace? My goal is to set the stage on which our story takes place in historical context. This will help show why Q1's work is so important.

A century ago, the composition of garbage was very different than it is today. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, before electricity became a common home amenity, about three quarters of household waste was ash, a substance so benign it was often repurposed into pavement, lye, or fertilizer. By the mid-1920s, most homes in Edmonton were electrified, and the discovery of Edmonton's subterranean coal deposits meant that heat derived from burning wood soon gave way to less-ashy carbonite, Edmonton's original black gold.

Back then, thrift and repair were common virtues, even before the Great Depression necessitated them. Torn clothes were repurposed into rags, marrow was salvaged into soap and candles, slops were fed to pigs. Mass production hadn't proliferated yet, with its consequent alienation from the means of production. Skills like garment-mending and basic carpentry were commonly practised in the home, and thus the average person could appraise the value of something's materials and construction, as well as how it might be repaired. Waste historian Susan Strasser writes:

The preindustrial blacksmith made things for people in his immediate community; customizing the product, modifying or transforming it according to the user, was routine. Customers would bring things back if something went wrong; repair was thus an extension of fabrication. With industrialization and eventually with mass production, making things became the province of machine tenders with limited knowledge.

Today, making and repairing things have become hobbies, "perhaps not yet exceptional but no longer typical."

Back in the 30s, dumpsites were largely informal and unregulated, even within city limits. Landfills as we know them didn't come around until the middle of the century. Recycling, much more costly than landfilling, developed in fits and starts after that. Other waste management procedures have risen and fallen, like the once-popular incineration, as people began to realize and respond to the ecological damages we collectively wreak.

Despite being one of the first North American cities to have a vast water treatment system, Edmonton was later than most in developing a civic waste management strategy. It didn't happen until after World War II, after the city had surpassed 100,000 people. A few years earlier, a concept called the sanitary landfill was developed by civil engineer Jean Vincenz for remote military bases during the war. At these bases, refuse had to be contained close-by, safely, compact, and with minimal odour.

The basic model of the sanitary landfill is this: refuse is spread into layers 8 feet thick and then topped with a foot or two of soil. On top of the dirt layer, more trash can be piled and spread and compacted (with the help of heavy machinery) and then topped with dirt again, and so on and so forth until the landfill reaches capacity and is topped with one final layer of dirt and grass to help keep everything in place. The giant trash-filled knoll is retired as a dumpsite, a bulging burial plot that, very slowly, sinks into the earth. Rancid, toxic runoff drips from the slowly decomposing trash downward. If the landfill has been built to code, the leachate collects on a thick, impermeable floor, normally made out of plastic but previously made from clay, where these liquids are carried away from the landfill so as not to contaminate the soil and water table below.

Within a decade of their advent sanitary landfills became the standard waste management method in the western world. They're less smelly than the open pit or ravine dumping of old, they require little expertise and manpower to maintain, and they're much cheaper than recycling. Plus, if our waste is carried to the outskirts of civilization and buried, it's a problem that is out of sight and out of mind, like cancer in strangers, or prisons. Globe and Mail journalist John Marshall said:

The important thing to remember about landfills is that they're not just an unfortunate byproduct of capitalism; they actually represent the success of capitalism. The extent to which profit has been achieved is the extent to which we have more garbage to put in the landfill.

But we also need to think about the amount of labour that went into producing these products; the time that was spent making these products that were specifically designed to wear out faster than they needed to. What else could we have done with that time? What other productive, scientific, creative pursuits could we have invested that time in? What kind of society could we have created alternatively?

The first disposable products were made of paper: plates, straws, napkins, cups, collars, toilet. Following this came disposable packaging – a novel, viral phenomenon prized for its superior cleanliness, shippability, and marketing potential. A toothbrush company in the dawn of the disposable packaging era justified its “sterilized” box as a way for customers to not have to “buy from a fingered pile of dusty, germ-laden tooth brushes, handled by nobody knows who.” Note the abject language. In the post-war boom, the world fell in love with a whole new material, which surpassed paper in cleanliness, shippability, and marketing potential: plastic.

Just like the sanitary landfill, plastics proliferated after WWII. It quickly became a wildly popular manufacturing material that lent itself well to mass production. It was cheap to produce, inert, mouldable, durable, and versatile; using 5 simple ingredients – cellulose, coal, natural gas, salt and crude oil – plastic can be formed into many different polymers with different physical characteristics. Suddenly, all sorts of things, previously made from other materials, were made of plastic: tents, spoons, steering wheels, binders, boat hulls, bottles, boxes. And packaging. So much packaging. Susan Strasser reports that

in 1960 about 10 percent of all polymers produced went into packaging; by 1966 that number had doubled, and by 1969 nearly a quarter of plastics were made into packaging, almost all of which eventually became garbage.

In the post-war boom, Edmonton had two strategies for dealing with its solid waste: landfills, which were becoming increasingly sophisticated, and incineration. The Rat Creek Incinerator, where the Commonwealth Stadium now sits, and the Mill Creek Incinerator, now the Muttart Conservatory grounds, each burned hundreds of tons of trash every day, spewing plumes of smoke that would sprinkle “black snow,” on the roofs and cars and lawns of the adjacent neighbourhoods.

In 1962, biologist Rachel Carson wrote and published *Silent Spring*, a book that catalysed the environmental movement. In it, Carson documents the dangers of a commonly used pesticide DDT. The book was hugely influential and led to the banning of DDT, as well as stricter regulations on other toxic aerosols. People were getting woke to the problem of pollution, including Edmontonians.

In 1971 Edmonton elected to close its last operational incinerator, a massive, unpopular eyesore in the center of the city, next to pristine river valley parkland. It was torn down and the land was used to build a roadway, a parkway, and the Muttart Conservatory. The landscaping, which restored Gallagher Hill to its ski hill glory of yesteryear, was capped with a giant, white, 5-ton steel dove in 1988, beneath which is buried a time capsule that the City put there til 2088.

After the Mill Creek Incinerator was closed, landfills once again became Edmonton's dominant waste management strategy, and as the population boomed, so did trash production per capita. By the 1990s, most of the city dumps were full and had been turned into parks named after local (white) heroes: Mayor Hawrelak, Methodist missionary Rundle, the Famous Five. The last remaining City dump was Clover Bar Landfill, on the city's eastern outskirts. It too was predicted to fill up by the early 2000s. Fuelled by the urgency of the need, the City put together an ambitious plan to create a comprehensive waste management centre near the existing landfill that, within a decade of its opening, became the most influential of its kind, attracting attention from around the world.

3.2 – EWMC

In 1990 the City secured the 223 hectares around the existing Clover Bar landfill for their trash supercentre. Its location was perfect: on the east end, just past refinery row, where the landscape was already industrial and the westerly winds carried the stench away from the city. It was close to arterial roads, making accessible for garbage trucks, and the space was vast. The City of Edmonton invested aggressively in a multi-facility marvel of engineering that collected the region's refuse and sorted it into different waste streams, diverting it from the landfill. It was a place where compost could be created from organic waste on a mass scale and sold to market. It was a place where plastic could be cleaned and converted into biofuel. It was a place of possibility.

It was a costly endeavour but politically popular, in part because of the public commitment by the City to run the place on three guiding principles: financial sustainability, economic stewardship, and social justice. The financial tenet was achieved partly through public-private partnerships, or 3Ps. The City of Edmonton, owner of the site, contracts much of its internal operations to private companies. The waste-to-biofuels plant was built and is operated by a chemical engineering company called Enerkem that has a patent on their process. The anaerobic digester is run by an American company called Suez, which specializes in that kind of composting. The electronic waste recycling is done by a company called Quantum Lifecycle Partners, which run similar recyclers across the country. 3P agreements give the City the power to form contracts with whomever they choose, meaning that if a contractor is not performing well, the City can terminate or run out their contract and find another company to do business with.

The second tenet, environmental stewardship, is borne out by the alternatives to landfilling available at the EWMC. On top of the city-wide recycling program started in the 80s, ahead of most Canadian cities, the trash itself is sorted at the EWMC. Some of it is sent to the recycling facilities on-site, some to Enerkem, and some to the composters. Useful household objects found “on the line” are sold in Reuse Centres, stores run by the City.

The third tenet was that the EWMC be socially beneficial. This was fulfilled in the following concentric ways: it provides a large number of people with a comprehensive waste management solution, it provides hundreds of jobs, and about 70 of them are done by people who really need them.

3.3 - Quality One

6:23 a.m.

The morning meeting is led by three women: Kathy, Pat, and Janey. Kathy is the company's founder and general manager, her younger sister Pat oversees technical operations, and their honorary sister Janet helps Kathy manage the staff. In the staff room, the familial bonds are apparent in how physically comfortable people are with each other. The meeting starts with a general check-in.

"How's everyone doing?" Kathy asks, getting a read of the room. Janet gently teases Malcolm as he walks in late again.

Pat gives the tech rundown. "Line 2 is down today," she says, "so we'll get the early team to clean the trommels. Enerkem is running at half-capacity so we'll pull a few hands off of plastics and get them on the floor to do maintenance."

Nods of understanding, and then Kathy adjourns the meeting with some warmth.

"Have a great day, everyone. Look out for each other and be good to yourselves."

Some of them hug Kathy on their way out. Some got their hugs beforehand.

As they file out, they pinch and twist their earplugs in and enter the cacophonous guts of the building, the sprawling complexity of conveyor belts carrying trash from the tipping floor through a complex system of filters and sorting rooms, where people sift the trash by hand, into massive spinning trommels that sift it further, and then on to another conveyor and dumped below ground into massive blue trucks that then carry it to a landfill bigger than any the City ever housed, some 85 kilometres away, in a town called Ryley.

The trash that's saved from the Ryley-bound stuff gets sent down other waste streams; organic matter is conveyed to the composters next door, plastics are cleaned and sent to become ethanol next door on the other side, and electronics are sent to the e-recycler kitty corner to the IPTF. In the sort rooms, people in full-body protective gear stand at stations next to the conveyor belts that pass through the room. Each station has

a chute near it that connects to collection bins or conveyor belts below. Whatever is thrown down them journeys elsewhere. Every sorter is looking for certain things; Eli grabs oversized items that might clog the trommels, Shayla looks for hazardous items like batteries, and Norm is trained on recyclable beverage containers, which add about \$30,000 to the City's coffers annually.

There isn't much in Q1's Human Resources Manual that differentiates it from other companies, except for a few key passages. On page 4 it says,

in working with the EWMC, Q1 will provide meaningful employment opportunities for persons that have barriers to employment which have marginalized them in the past.

On page 35 it says, "Q1 fundamentally believes and supports in its actions that people with barriers to employment, including criminal convictions, can still become valued and trusted employees." Most of Q1's sorting staff have criminal records, and many have spent their entire adult lives in and out of jail. At 28 years old, Shayla had never had a job before Q1. Aron had been incarcerated at 12 and then on-again off-again throughout his young adulthood. Same for Kenny and Norm and Tyler and Daline and Chris and Stacey and so on. Criminality is an enduring social stigma that severely inhibits one's hireability, and Q1's explicit goal is to help solve that social problem.

Prior to Q1, Kathy worked for decades in human resource positions for large companies, and she was good at it. Then a dear friend of hers died, and at his funeral, people spoke of the great service he'd given to the community. How he'd generous and kind and served people. Kathy came away from that funeral in an existential crisis.

"If I died tomorrow," Kathy thought, "no one would say that. I'd been working in human resources for 20 years; I hadn't even served myself."

Shortly after the onset of the crisis, the City of Edmonton was looking to fill contracts for their latest invention, the IPTF. The IPTF to take over for the Clover Bar Landfill when it closed in 2009. The City had managed to squeeze an extra 18 years into the landfill's projected lifespan when they'd bought all the land around it in the 90s, but now the mountain was so big, perched above the North Saskatchewan, and Ryley had recently agreed to host our next landfill. The IPTF is where trash would be sorted, and they were looking for a company to fill that need. Kathy applied.

She called her company Quality One Training and Support, Inc., and she would hire people with barriers to employment, including criminal records, histories of addiction, new immigrants status, and disabilities. Q1 got the contract and in 2009, when the landfill closed and the IPTF opened, Kathy was ready with a roster of new recruits.

During one of our interviews, I asked Kathy if she had consciously built her company around an EoC. She said that she had, but added, "I'd go so far as to say it's an ethics of love." In another interview she explained that she "wanted to create a place where it's okay to love the people you work with." Putting these intentions into practise is sometimes messy. While Kathy and Janet refrain from firing employees, preferring to extend grace and understanding to offenders, they have on a few rare occasions let people go for violent behaviour, including uttering death threats. They have attended parole hearings, court cases, staff weddings, citizenship ceremonies, helped people find housing, organized a bus route to and from the site (bus passes are one of the benefits of employment), and so many other things that go far beyond the normal parameters of normal employer-employee relations. Theirs is a workplace based on an EoC, and I set out to film it.

Chapter 4: The Film

4.1 - Introduction

Since its inception, the EoC has grown into a robust moral theory with a diversity of thinkers contributing to its development. But there is a noticeable lack of real-world examples in the literature. There's some irony in this, considering that care ethics is, in part, a reaction against the context-deprived objectivity asserted by traditional moral theories. I hope this paper and companion film contribute to a growing body of real-world examples of an EoC in action.

The idea of making a film about Q1 first occurred to me after that first tour in 2011, mentioned in the introduction. Shortly after the tour, I called Kathy and pitched the idea of making a short documentary about Q1, which she was warm to. I gathered a few friends and filmed over the course of two days. I interviewed some of the sorters, filmed operations around the plant, and edited the footage into a short film called "Dump," which screened at a few film festivals and now lives on YouTube. After making that film, 8 years of life happened. All the while, I was nagged by the ambition to make a longer, better documentary about Q1 for a wider audience. The world could learn from Q1. Their example could inspire other institutions to follow suit, hiring people with barriers to employment, creating a caring workplace culture.

More importantly, I hoped that such a document would demonstrate the importance of empathizing with people on the margins, and including them in our communities, our personal lives, and our moral consideration. Achieving this, such a film would be an act of social justice borne out of care.

4.2 – Methodology 2: The Production

In my application to the University of Alberta's new Master of Arts degree in Gender & Social Justice, I pitched the idea of a documentary as my thesis project, and the department accepted. I moved back from Vancouver and got started. After a year of coursework, I embarked on the filmmaking process, and it proved a much harder road than anticipated.

First, there was the university's research ethics board. They required a detailed description of the project followed by several rounds of revisions. Their criteria for studies on human subjects was understandably stringent and designed to prevent harm and exploitation. For example, I

proposed paying each participant an honorarium of \$500 for their time, but the ethics board deemed it too much, potentially coercive, and thus we settled on \$50 honorariums. While I agreed with the principle behind their reasoning (don't bribe people to participate), it illustrated the limitation of a universalized rule. Not all participants gave the same amount of time and energy to their participation. Kathy, for instance, let me interview her a dozen times, mostly off-camera but twice on, for about 2 hours each time. She let me film her working, in transit, and at home. Aron, Kenny, and Stacey similarly let me film them in their homes, at work on the sorting lines, and at places in between, as well as giving multiple in-camera interviews. Other participants, like Norm and Shayla, were only interviewed for about 20 minutes, and others still were only filmed for a few minutes. Why should they all get the same amount? It's no great injustice, but it points to the inadequacy in applying a universal rule to vastly different circumstances. It illustrates how an ethics of justice, while easier to formalize, is inferior to an EoC at actually meting out justice. An EoC is sensitive to context and intersectionality. What is each participant's financial need? What was their level of involvement in the film? What is the most appropriate form of compensation for them? An ethics of care, it seems, is difficult to formalize.

After receiving approval from the research ethics board, I began visiting the EWMC to develop relationships with the staff. I paid weekly visits, often accompanied by cinematographer Gerardo Ramos or sound recordist Tomáš Andel, even if we weren't recording. The goal was relationship-building. We visited with the Q1 staff and discussed what the film might look like. I obtained formal consent from them long before filming commenced, and I wrote a treatment of the film (kind of like a script but for a documentary) and shared it with them to give a clear sense of my goals and approach.

We began filming a few months after our first visit. We eased into it, filming the exteriors first, then the machinery, then people at work, then people outside of work, and then interviews. Things were going well. But about a month into this process we hit a wall that stopped production for nearly six months.

As mentioned earlier, the City of Edmonton owns and operates the EWMC. Q1 applies to renew their contract with the City every few years, and so far the City has always approved it. While I had obtained con-

sent from Q1 staff to be filmed, I hadn't sought the permission of the City, the corporate entity that owns the property.

Knowing that the EWMC sent their processed trash to be dumped in Ryley, I wanted to film that part of the process. I called Beaver Hills Solutions, the company who operates the landfill there, and told them about the documentary. They asked to see a contract between the City and me, which I didn't have. which I hadn't thought to procure until that point. I told them I didn't have one, and they told me I needed to show one for them to consider letting us film there.

I asked Kathy who I should ask about forming such a contract, and she gave me a few contacts with the City. I emailed them and continued filming other things while I waited to hear back. In the meantime, Beaver Hills Solutions had contacted the City, informing them that a graduate student was filming a documentary on their property without a contract.

A few days later, I got an email from a City representative asking me to cease filming until a contract was executed between the City and I. I was advised to hire a lawyer and so I did, and embarked on a contract negotiation process that took almost 6 months. During that time, I was barred from entering the property, which hurt my relationships with Q1 staff a little. I worked to maintain the relationships by texting those staff whose numbers I had, attending their annual summer BBQ (which was off-site), filming with a few staff in their homes, and regularly checking in with Kathy over the phone. It helped, but the delay made things difficult.

I used the time to raise more money for the film (and lawyer fees), plan out our shooting days, and film what I could off-site. When the contract was finalized, we had 6 shooting days at the EWMC, 8 hours each, had to complete safety training beforehand, weren't allowed to film City employees (only Q1), and gave the City say over the final cut.

We spaced out our filming days over the course of a few months (August 2019 to January 2020) so that we'd have time to review footage in between and re-strategize for the next shooting day. We documented, in sound and image, as well as field notes along the way, the operations of Q1. We filmed Kathy and Janet and the sorting staff doing their jobs, we filmed them going to and from work, we filmed their summer BBQ and annual Christmas Party, and we filmed interviews with a dozen of them, a few of them in their homes.

My analysis of the footage during our production period (August to January), was more emotional than theoretical, more aesthetic than academic. I was aiming to make a film that could show, rather than tell, how Q1 implements an EoC in their workplace, and the effects that it has on the employees. Aron, whom I interviewed in his grandmother's apartment because he was too self-conscious about the state of his, was stoic and serious in our early interview. Because of this, I wanted to film him walking around the IPTF and exploring his neighbourhood because those quiet, contemplative moments revealed something about his nature, about how he is when cameras aren't there. In the film we placed audio clips of Aron reflecting on his life beneath images of him going about his day: at work, at home, out socializing, in transit. To see someone on-screen, to hear their thoughts, to witness them sharing something of themselves, is to practise empathy. Film, like any art, is an act of care because it is carefully made and because, in training the viewer's attention to someone on-screen, it asks them to care.

With our footage gathered, we began editing in earnest in December 2019, two months before we finished filming. We continued to edit until April 2020, when I submitted the fine cut of the film as the first half of my thesis project, and we will continue editing the film until June 2020, when it will be ready to be released to the public.

4.3 - Research Findings

In short, my findings were complicated. There are clear benefits to Q1's practises: employees get bus passes, health care, a starting wage above minimum, regular staff potlucks, and a caring workplace environment.

"I would say that Q1 has become my community," Aron told me as we stood on the roof of the Boyle Street housing complex.

Aron is 30 years old, and he's been on the wrong end of the criminal justice system since 12, the age of moral maturity and legal culpability. Stability was rare in Aron's childhood, and tragedy and trauma struck early and often. He's been a ward of the state, a subject of the still inappropriately-named Indian Act, and a numbered inmate in provincial and federal prisons. His two years with Q1 is the longest job he's ever had, and, admiring his work ethic, Kathy recently promoted him to a lead hand position, where he supervises the sort rooms. He told me that the job

has given him a sense of stability and purpose, and he's grateful for Kathy's emotional support. "Everyone needs that person who will be there for them no matter what, who won't give up on them."

Kathy first envisioned Q1 as a company where people with barriers to employment could enjoy stable employment for a while, and then move on to bigger and better things. Instead, it's become a job that people don't want to leave. Kathy jokingly laments their low turnover rate because it means they can help fewer people.

Along with these positive outcomes, there are negative ones. It's the sorters that don't go on to bigger and better things that keep Kathy up at night. She claims responsibility for them, calling them her "failures." "This work breaks my heart every day," she said in an interview. "It can be something as simple as looking someone in the eyes in the morning and knowing that they're hiding from you the fact that they used [drugs] the night before." She continued:

Sometimes it's hearing that someone's dead. We've had a number of our guys go on the run and several of them end up in shootouts with the police and end up dead. We've had guys killed in back alleys, we've had guys die of overdoses, we've had guys die in knife-fights...

The act of caring bonds people, and for an empath like Kathy this can be a difficult burden to bear. Q1's attempt at providing caring employment helps some who have fallen through the cracks, but not all, and not forever. A company can't solve all social ills. As Stacey, who worked for Q1 for a decade, put it, "two women in the middle of Canada can't do it alone, man. We've all got to step up."

Conclusion

A few things are immediately clear. For one thing, we need to find a way to stop making so much garbage. According to World Bank Researchers, the world makes at least 3.5 million tons of solid waste every day, most of which is plastic. The vast majority of it ends up in landfills, though much finds its way into forests, rivers, oceans, and streets (where it is legally categorized as litter). Sometimes landfills follow the sanitary model, which reduces their ecological harm and foul stench, but most dumps around the world don't. Most are just that: dumps. Vast, open piles of smelly, toxic detritus. Perhaps it would be useful to change the language of abjection around garbage in order to think differently about our relationship to it. Maybe that will help us develop our EoC and we'll practise recycling more, mending our own clothes, repairing broken things. Living an ethical life, it seems, entails a lot of work and a lot of care. Maybe Nel Noddings was right; maybe you can't care about everything. And maybe she was right in her revision that it's still imperative to try.

Second, the effects of an ethics of care are hard to measure. Kathy doesn't have data on everyone who's ever worked there, but she knows that many have moved on to other professions, many have relapsed into destructive behaviours, and many have died untimely deaths. An EoC is at work in Q1, but it's a work in progress, and it's not always successful. The binary of success and failure is simplistic anyway.

4:13 p.m.

Aron's workday ends earlier than expected, hours before the first bus back to the city, so he catches a ride with Kathy. She drops him off with an awkward car hug at the Abbottsfield bus depot and he pushes in his earbuds. He takes in the already darkening sky. This job, like most, has echoes of prison: structured time, a dress code, concrete walls and few windows. But the differences are many and meaningful: he has a good wage, meaningful work, benefits, a healthy community, a boss that offers awkward car hugs. He can leave any time he likes. He's not an inmate at Q1, not a criminal, but a human being.

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