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"If we start premiering movies, if we have Alberta's best haunted house, if we have Edmonton's most haunted, people are going to come and start seeing this stuff all the time, and it'll actually become a tourist destination. That's our goal." - Parry Plunkett

"The city of Edmonton has collected more than its share of monsters over the years, but one that's stood out most is "Deadmonton." This year, a group of horror masters are hoping to reclaim the title and turn Edmonton into the Halloween capital of Canada."

What started nearly a year ago as an idea between a trio of friends has blossomed into a full-fledged festival. Tired of bringing "Deadmonton" into the city, disillusioned (initial) front-line worker and ghoulish classic, Darrel's Plunkie, Christian Nelson, and Derek Clayton collaborated in November 2008 to seize and re-brand the name.

"It was the naming game for people who don't like Edmonton - they call it 'Deadmonton' because there's nothing to do here," Plunkie says. "So let's make something positive out of that and reclaim that name. Instead of other people imprinting a name on us, let's embrace it, and make it into something that's memorable for a reason."

In the 11 months since disillusionment (as they've re-dubbed it) has birthed a five-person council and has managed to recruit dozens of Halloween lovers, eager to show the city's residents that Edmonton's festival season doesn't need to die with the summer months.

"Deadmonton's festival city, but we're kind of summer-festival oriented," Nelson says of the role they hope to see disillusionment assume.

"We ended up finding out that there's a lot of interest in Halloween and the whole spooky season. We realized that we could actually pull something off! - create a festival. There's a hole in the festival schedule between September and November," Plunkie echoes.

The festival council, which has also recruited Champagne-based Amanda Anderson, isn't just composed exclusively of Edmontonians; either. Balancing the many areas of involvement required to pull together an organization of such a scale, each member has a role to fill. Out of the three "Founders," Plunkie brings his Halloween expertise to the table as the administrator of Edmonton.com, and has years of involvement in the city's October events.

"If you go over to his place, his coffee-table books are "How to make a false beard" and "How to duplicate Becki wounds," Nelson jokes. "His dining room's full of weird little things." Clayton, meanwhile, has been a primary organizer in Edmonton's annual haunted house festival Dedfest (formerly Dedmonton Horror Festival). And Nelson brings an Edmonton-centric spin to the group, coming together with the others via ConnectEdmonton, an online networking forum.

"I'm not a big Halloween guy quite honestly," Nelson confesses. "People are always a little surprised that I'm going to costume store grand openings and dealing with lounge clubs and nightclubs. It's not normally my thing, but it's fun, and I think there's huge potential in it for Edmonton."

Part of the group's strategy in reclaiming the disillusionment brand is to focus on what they feel is one of Edmonton's largest draws, community involvement. For several years, Dedfest was known for Halloween Alley, a spooky counterpart to the renowned Candy Cane Lane. But towards the end of the century, the event began to lose momentum, if not from lack of popularity, then from the difficulty of pulling together the heavy effort. Nelson says that after speaking with some of the former organizers, he understands why collaborating with an entire street's worth of businesses can prove too arduous.

"You've got vandalism issues, and just overall cost issues, and all those sorts of things, so it's really tough for them to put it together. They're still trying to get something going, but we're sort of realizing that without a catalyzing force, Halloween Alley is probably not going to be what it was any time soon."

But instead of taking this as a blow to the city's Halloween spirit, Nelson and Plunkie see it as an opportunity to re-focus how Edmonton Halloween events are promoted.

"What we try to do is make that easy, through our creation, by taking our event's Moss Hummel," Nelson says. "We've got all these people enough of the city - really around the neighbor, but all around the city - who are the home haunters that decorate their houses up like crazy. So this year what we're doing is linking all these houses, so if you do want to, you can keep in your car and drive around the whole northeast or the whole city will look at all these candy-decorated houses. This year, it's just trying to get everybody..."