

Film commissioner Patti Tucker ready for new visions of reality; Growing cynicism about government, industry prompts departure

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Edmonton film commissioner Patti Tucker radiates a kind of beauty you can't capture on film or in pixels.

That Tucker is a beautiful woman is not my point. She is all that and more. What is my point? I can't believe I'm writing this, but here goes: I think Patti Tucker has an aura.

No, I didn't see rays of heavenly light beaming off her. I just kind of, well, felt it. Yes, that sounds like blather. But Tucker is one of a handful of people I've met over the years who radiate authentic, deep, spiritual joy. She continues to look joyful even as she prepares to leave one of the coolest jobs in the city for one of the most unusual. Edmonton's film commissioner is leaving this fall to be a spiritual teacher.

The born-and-raised Edmontonian has studied personal development in all sorts of traditions, including native spirituality, since she was 18 years of age. At age 50, she's reached a point where she feels the call to teach and help others.

She will be missed. Tucker worked her tail off to bring film and TV productions to Edmonton. She had to. Being Edmonton's film commissioner is like being Iraq's minister of tourism. Tough sell. There have been numerous highlights, including hooking the big one, *The Assassination of Jesse James*. During shooting she met Brad Pitt briefly and saw Angelina Jolie up close. The producers originally knew nothing about Edmonton. But Tucker lured them up and blew them away with a trip to Fort Edmonton Park. They loved the setting and they loved our light. Apparently, Edmonton has an aura, too.

Perhaps her biggest coup for the local economy was NBC's short-lived horror anthology, *Fear Itself*. Only 13 episodes were shot here last winter and spring, but the production spilled \$1 million into the economy for every episode.

The second year of the deal with Lionsgate is on hold because the Stelmach government won't pony up the incentives. Tucker says it's another reason she's comfortable leaving. The Alberta government is trailing other province's in trying to attract film and television productions.

"That's one of the reasons I came to a crossroads in my career," says Tucker. "I was becoming jaded and cynical with this government."

Another reason, she says, was the sheer amount of arrogance on display in film and television. "The industry is alive with ego, so it doesn't really align with me anymore."

Mind you, she'll continue to run across people with views that don't align with hers. Alternative healing and spirituality conflict with the religious, medical and scientific establishment. You can't prove there's a soul. You can't prove there's something divine to seek. You can't prove the existence of chakras, or long-buried traumas that need to be released.

People who talk about such things are often deemed flakes. Are you a flake, Patti Tucker?

When I ask, her face lights up with another smile. She doesn't care if some people don't get her. She knows her heart. By the way, I don't think for a moment that she's a flake. Patti Tucker is a significant woman. That she's joining the spiritual realm only supports my own worldview.

For what it's worth, I believe we are here to grow towards something. The words we use to describe our search -- be they religious, New Age or material -- don't matter to me. What some call divine others call enlightenment, or just a natural high.

Tucker will be serving people instead of serving this city. Happiness is in the service, she says. "You can't give a better gift than helping another human being to live a better life." She and a partner will lead workshops on personal development. She will work individually with clients. She will continue her search and help others with theirs. She plans a book, too. It is human to long for something bigger or better. We've been taught that things, stuff and products are what we long for. In my experience, a new gadget or product brings but fleeting happiness. Tucker seems to long for little right now. I long for what Tucker has. I want an aura. Preferably in white, to match my iPod.