

WORKING TOGETHER

A Winnipeg Foundation Magazine

Shelter From the Storm

Candace House
Creates Space for
Survivors of Homicide

It Takes a Village

For Every Family
Initiative Provides
Support Across the City

Winnipeg
Foundation



Manitoba Hindu Seniors offers a place to gather, connect, and share cultural knowledge.



Dancers perform at a Manitoba Hindu Seniors (MHS) concert in April, 2026. MHS provides opportunities for cultural exchange, relationship

building across generations, and day trips to local attractions including Fort Whyte, The Leaf, and The Mint.

A Winnipeg Where Community Life Flourishes For All

Winnipeg Foundation is Winnipeg’s forever fund. Built by the generosity of Winnipeggers, we turn gifts of all sizes into lasting support for our community. Because generosity is everywhere, and when we nurture it together, community life can flourish for all, now and forever.

Winnipeg Foundation Land Acknowledgement

The Winnipeg Foundation is located on Treaty 1 Territory. We acknowledge that Manitoba is on Treaty Territories and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anisininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuliné, and Nehethowuk Nations, and the Homeland of the Red River Métis.

The City of Winnipeg’s clean drinking water comes from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation in Treaty 3 Territory. The electrical and natural gas systems that we rely on are located and operate across Manitoba, in Treaty Territories 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. We express our gratitude for these vital resources.

We are committed to working with everyone in our province towards a shared goal of Truth and Reconciliation.

WORKING TOGETHER

Summer 2026

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Cecilly Hildebrand, executive director of Candace House, is a passionate advocate for victims of homicide, and has been with the organization since its inception.

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Evolving As An Organization

Message From The Board Chair

Being the first Indigenous person to step into the role of Board Chair at Winnipeg Foundation is an honour and a responsibility.

As a member of Skownan First Nation, and through my work alongside children, families, and communities, I have seen the strength that exists across our city. I have also seen the importance of creating conditions for that strength to be supported and sustained. Strong communities are built through relationships, shared leadership, and a commitment to long-term change.

Winnipeg Foundation is in a period of change, which is reflected not only in its renewed brand but in how it is evolving as an organization. This year marks the final year of our current Strategic Plan, offering an important opportunity to reflect on what has been learned and to consider how we move forward. As we begin working on our 2027 Strategic Plan, we are deepening our understanding of what is working well in our community, and where we can evolve to better support those we serve.

Our next plan will build on this foundation, with a continued focus on C.A.R.E. (Community Area for Revitalization and Equity) and supporting children and families, including those involved in the child welfare system, through community-led approaches. Supporting families is central to strong communities. In this issue, “It Takes A Village” (pg. 40), a story about the For Every Family Initiative, highlights the importance of collaborative, community-driven approaches that help families thrive and strengthen the systems that support them.

Reconciliation calls on us to support Indigenous leadership, respect Indigenous knowledge systems, and ensure that communities can shape their own futures. This work is already happening across Winnipeg, led by Indigenous organizations and community leaders whose impact continues to grow. You can read about some of this work in this issue of *Working Together*, from the impact of the Murray Sinclair Memorial Fund (pg. 54) and Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund (pg. 82), to the leadership and innovation found in community organizations like Life’s Journey (pg. 78) and Oshki-Giizhig (pg. 52).

As Board Chair, I see governance as essential to enabling this work; ensuring accountability to community, and stewardship of the Community Fund in a way that balances present needs with our responsibility to future generations. I am grateful to be part of this work and look forward to what we will continue to build together.

Diane Roussin
Board Chair



Community Life Flourishes For All

Message From The President and CEO

Welcome to a redesigned Working Together!

Spring is a season of renewal and a time when new growth emerges, and familiar landscapes evolve. For Winnipeg Foundation, this spirit of renewal feels especially meaningful right now, reminding us that change is not only constant, but something we shape together.

This year is not only Winnipeg Foundation's 105th birthday but also marks an important moment of transformation for our organization. You will notice through our website, newsletters, and, of course, this publication that we have introduced a refreshed brand. The Foundation's new brand reflects who we are today and the role we strive to play in our community. It is an expression of our ongoing commitment to be responsive, inclusive, and forward-looking in how we support a 'Winnipeg where community life flourishes for all.'

Winnipeg Foundation, together with our donors and community partners, has reached an extraordinary milestone. More than \$1 billion has been granted back to our community since the Foundation was established in 1921. What makes this moment even more remarkable is the momentum it represents. While it took more than a century to reach this first billion, we now expect to grant the next \$1 billion in less than a decade, which is a powerful reflection of the growing generosity, vision, and collective commitment to building a Winnipeg where community life flourishes for all.

This momentum is driven by the enduring strength of our endowment model and the continued trust of our community. Over the past year alone, more than 9,700 gifts were made to our 5,000+ endowment funds, and approximately \$115 million was distributed to support community priorities. In this issue of Working Together, you will read more about how generosity translates into community well-being, about how each gift can change lives for the better and make our city a stronger, healthier home for all Winnipeggers.

As we steward Winnipeg Foundation into its next century, we are guided by a deep responsibility to ensure it continues to grow, evolve, and serve future generations to remain here for good, forever. We are profoundly grateful to everyone who is part of this journey, and we look forward to optimism and purpose in all that we continue to build together.

Sky Bridges ICD.D
President and CEO

Winnipeg
Foundation



Winnipeg's Forever Fund

We are proud to introduce our refreshed brand: Winnipeg Foundation.

We are still the community foundation you know and trust. Our mission, values, and endowment model have not changed. We exist to inspire generosity and support the well-being of our community, now and for generations to come.

What is changing is how we share that story.

Our refreshed brand is more accessible, modern, and inclusive. We want more people to understand who we are, what donor generosity makes possible, and how they can be part of it. The name is shorter, the meaning clearer. Dropping "The" brings Winnipeg Foundation closer to the city it serves. This is not an organization apart from Winnipeg. It is our city's forever fund, built by Winnipeggers, for Winnipeg.

Our new logo has a ribbon at its center, symbolizing connection and continuity. A ribbon can mark a gift, honour a moment, and link one person to another. For Winnipeg Foundation, it represents the ties between donors, charities, community leaders, and neighbours. It shows generosity moving through the city today while carrying care into the future.

A new colour helps Winnipeg Foundation show up with more clarity and energy across our website, social media, print materials, events, and community spaces. It also signals that while we are rooted in more than 100 years of trust, we are looking ahead to the next 100 years of generosity and community care.

Our new website gives donors, charities, fundholders, advisors, and community members a simpler, clearer way to connect. Information is easier to find, and the path to giving or applying for support is easier to follow. It also gives us more room to show how a gift becomes a grant, how a grant supports a charity, and how that work strengthens lives and neighbourhoods.

Visit wpgfdn.org and watch for Winnipeg Foundation in the community in new ways.

The look is changing. The promise is not.

The Hockey Education Reaching Out Society

Not All HEROS Wear Capes

By Sabrina Carnevale



In Winnipeg’s North End, a volunteer-run program is proving that hockey can offer kids more than just a sport to play.

The Hockey Education Reaching Out Society, better known as HEROS, has spent more than two decades making sure cost and circumstance don’t prevent kids from playing. For many of them, it’s their first time on skates. For others, it turns into something more: new friendships, a boost in confidence, and a place that feels like they belong.

Since 2000, HEROS has made sure that kids have everything they need: equipment, transportation, ice time, mentorship, even snacks—all at no cost to families. But that’s only part of it. What keeps kids showing up is harder to put a price on. The program is built around creating an environment where young people feel safe and supported.

“Hockey’s conventional structure just doesn’t work for a lot of families,” says Kevin Hodgson, executive director of HEROS, who has been with the organization since 2006 and is based in Calgary.

“A lot of the kids we serve have been told they don’t belong in hockey—or at least made to feel like it. Our job is to create a place where they do.”



The idea goes back to founder and president Norm Flynn, a North End kid who played junior and university hockey and never forgot what the sport did for him. He moved to Vancouver, where he now lives, and started HEROS in the Downtown Eastside with one idea in mind—that other kids deserved the same opportunities hockey gave him. That was more than 20 years ago.

Since then, the program has reached more than 20,000 young people across the country. Today, about 800 kids take part each week. Close to 100 of them are in Winnipeg.

Locally, the program runs out of Seven Oaks Arena and works with youth from ten North End schools. From the moment kids arrive, mentors are there to make sure no one feels lost or out of place.



Addisen first got involved in Grade 8, mentoring younger kids and helping them learn how to skate. That was nearly three years ago – and she hasn’t stopped coming back.

“I like skating and I like hanging out with kids,” the 16-year-old says. “So, I figured, why not? And then I just kept at it.”

These days, she’s at the arena every Tuesday afternoon, helping Grade 5 and 6 players get dressed and tie their skates.

“The kids are all so welcoming,” she says. “They want your help and attention. It’s a nice feeling to be needed.”

A lot of the kids show up never having been on skates before. By March, those same kids are running drills.

“Seeing that progress is really cool,” she says. “Thinking, ‘I helped with that.’”

But it’s not just the skating that she’s noticed.

“So many kids that don’t go to the same school end up becoming friends.”



Addisen Wiebe is a youth mentor who helps support younger players in the HEROS program.

Programming runs from October through March and is supported in part by Winnipeg Foundation, which helps to keep participation free for everyone involved.

Without that kind of backing, Hodgson says, none of it would be possible.

“Without ice time, we’re just a good idea,” he says. “The funding helps us cover things like ice, equipment, transportation and insurance—things that make it possible for kids to show up and play.”

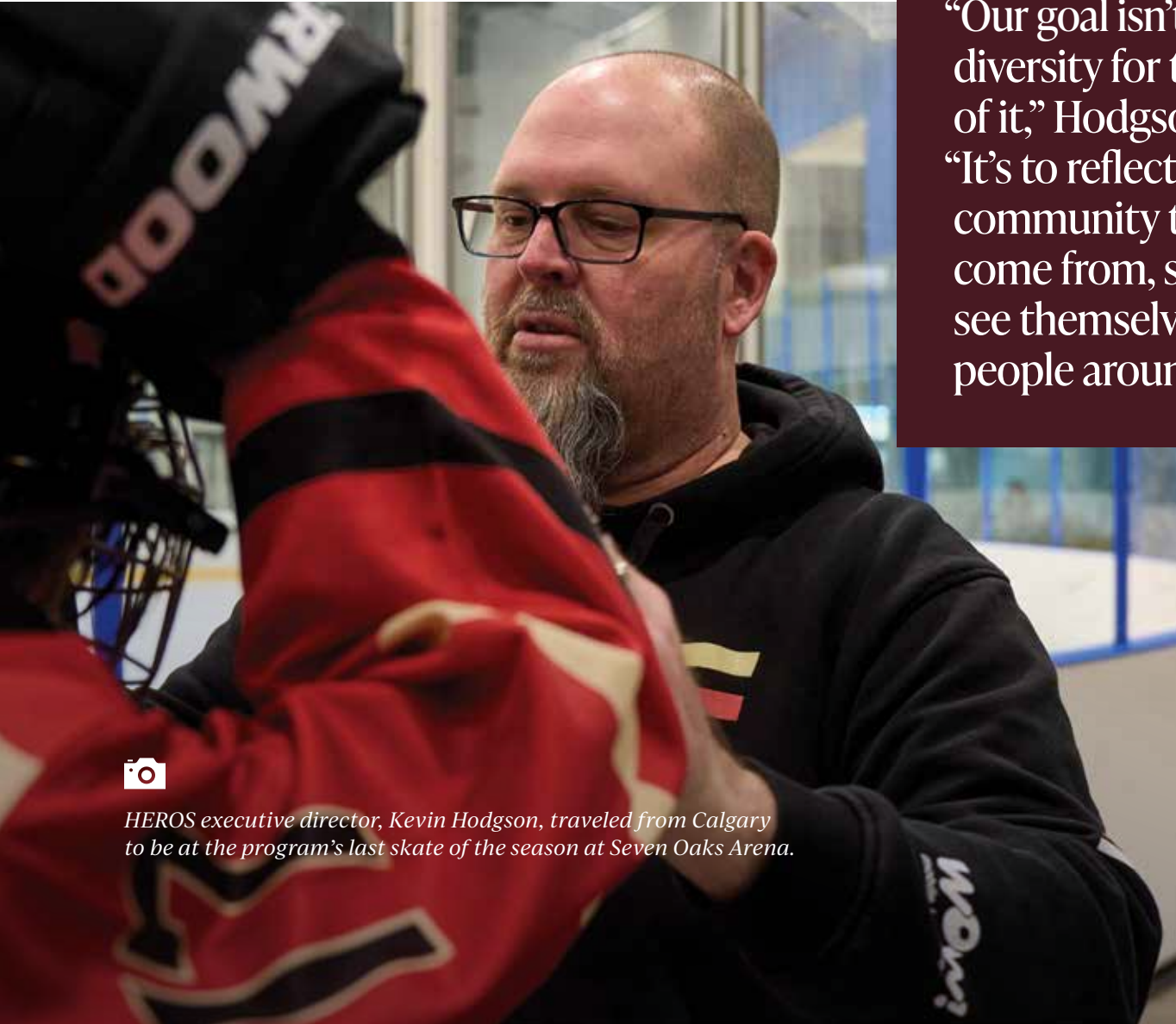
Hockey is the hook, but Hodgson will tell you the game is almost secondary. The real measure of success is whether a kid walks out of the arena feeling a little better about themselves than when they walked in.

Volunteers know players by name. They ask how school’s going, how things are at home. What starts as hockey talk can turn into a conversation about homework, trouble with classmates, or other personal challenges.

“If you get to know the person, it’s amazing the athlete they can become,” Hodgson says. “But the focus is getting to know the kids as people.”

Hodgson is also intentional about who the kids see when they walk in. Many of the participants identify as Indigenous, and HEROS is thoughtful about making sure the mentors around them come from the same community. For these kids, it means something to see themselves in the people beside them.

“Our goal isn’t to build diversity for the sake of it,” Hodgson says. “It’s to reflect the community the kids come from, so they see themselves in the people around them.”



HEROS executive director, Kevin Hodgson, traveled from Calgary to be at the program’s last skate of the season at Seven Oaks Arena.

That same thinking carries over into who the program recruits. Rather than pulling in kids who are already doing well, HEROS works with schools to find kids who would benefit most from being there.

“We actually ask the schools for the kids who need us,” Hodgson says. “We’re not looking to reward high achievers. We’re looking for kids who need a place where they feel accepted.”

There’s also different programming depending on age and need. Future Stars is for students in Grades 4 to 8 who are just getting started, before they move into All-Stars. And Super-HEROS serves youth between seven and 17 with cognitive or physical disabilities, adapting the game so everyone can participate.

For a lot of these kids, it’s an opportunity they may not have had otherwise. What they pick up —not just how to skate, but the belief that they can do hard things—stays with them long after the season ends.

“When a kid realizes they can do something they once thought was impossible, every other challenge suddenly feels more achievable,” Hodgson says.

The change shows up on the ice. But beyond that, Hodgson says, it shows up in how they carry themselves.

“We want kids to understand that where they come from doesn’t define where they’re going,” he says.

That’s what the program keeps coming back to—giving kids a place to figure that out for themselves, one stride at a time.





ESTATES & COMMUNITY FUND

A Legacy of Trust and Generosity

By Patricia Hyrmack, CFRE, MFA-P, Manager of Planned Giving. Patricia is proud to work with members of our community to help realize their philanthropic vision.

At The Winnipeg Foundation, we work alongside individuals and families who want their giving to be thoughtful, flexible, and have a lasting impact. Some are looking for a simple way to support the causes they care about today. Others want to build a legacy that will carry forward, honouring a loved one, celebrating a milestone, or creating a family tradition of generosity.

However you choose to give, we help connect your generosity to community-led work that strengthens lives, neighbourhoods, and opportunities across our city. Giving can start with a single gift, grow through shared decisions, and become a meaningful family legacy for generations to come.

For many generous individuals and families, philanthropy is a lifelong

expression of care for community. That generosity often continues beyond their lifetime—entrusted to the foundation to steward with purpose, care, and integrity.

As one daughter, Krista, shared of her parents, “They were both naturally philanthropic and supported many different charities throughout their lives.” That spirit of open-hearted giving is echoed in so many of the estates represented here—gifts rooted not in a single cause, but in a belief that the Foundation will carry their generosity forward with care and purpose.

Through gifts to the community fund, donors place confidence in the Foundation not only to steward their exceptional generosity, but also to direct resources where they are most needed over time. This flexi-

bility allows us to respond to evolving community needs and create meaningful impact—today and for generations to come.

We have had the privilege of thanking many of these generous individuals and families, though not all. To each of you, we extend our sincere gratitude for your trust and support.

If you have included—or are considering including—the Foundation in your estate plans, thank you. We would be honoured to thank you personally and to walk alongside you in shaping a legacy that will make a difference far into the future.

The full impact of your generosity may never be fully known, but its influence will be felt by countless generations to come.

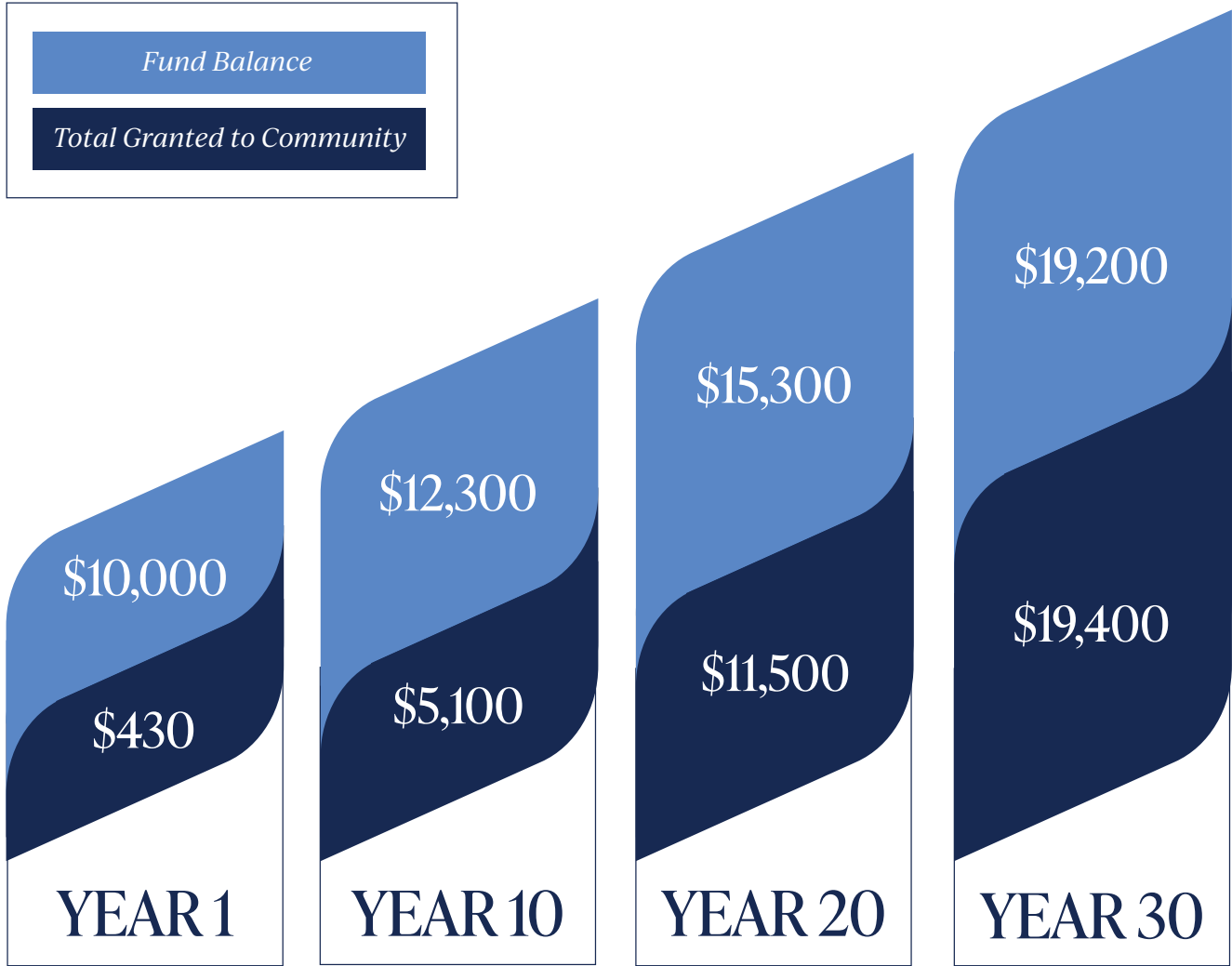
44% of estates received over the last five years have generously contributed to the Community Fund.

This represents an incredible overall contribution of **\$4,080,000**

THE POWER OF ENDOWMENT

Because an endowment fund lasts forever, a gift to your community foundation is a powerful choice for supporting your hometown over the long term.

Consider this: if you make a one-time \$10,000 gift to a charitable organization, it will be spent on immediate needs. If you make a gift of \$10,000 to an endowment at a community foundation (of course, you can make a gift of any size!), its impact will snowball over time.



Contributing to an endowment at your local community foundation is a way to create a lasting legacy and ensure the causes you hold dear receive support forever.

For more information, contact us at **204.944.9474** or **info@wpgfdn.org**

Shelter From the Storm

Candace House
Creates Space for
Survivors of Homicide

By Beth Schellenberg



*From left: Candace,
Cliff, and Wilma Derksen.*

Photos courtesy of Candace House

Wilma Derksen and I first connected over a video call on a frigid February morning. My immediate impression was one of generosity, with her time, her spirit, and her story. It has been more than forty years since Wilma's daughter, Candace, went missing on her way home from school.

Wilma is animated as she recalls Candace's playful demeanour, expressive blue eyes, love of swimming and animals, and most of all her magnetic social energy. Candace was, by all accounts, a bright young girl who thrived on human connection and had an open, joyful countenance. She possessed an innate ability to make those around her feel at ease, and with the family moving frequently before settling in Winnipeg's Elmwood neighbourhood, she made friends everywhere she went.

When Candace was three, Wilma and her husband Cliff moved their growing family to Calgary. Early one morning, Wilma discovered her daughter

on the front stoop of their new home, light brown curls flying as she enthusiastically banged away on pots and pans purloined from the kitchen. When asked what on earth she was doing, Candace laughed mischievously, eyes sparkling, and told her mom to wait and see; within minutes, kids from up and down the street descended on the house, drawn in by the clanging racket and delighted to find a vibrant addition to their neighbourhood pack.

Years later, while living in Winnipeg, Wilma discovered, much to her chagrin, that Candace had been sneaking a filthy stray cat into the house and had her two younger sisters, Odia and Syras, in on the scheme. She had taken pity on the poor creature, christened Percy despite being a female, and found a sweetness behind its matted black fur and broken tail, permanently crooked at a 90-degree angle. This was Candace's nature: gentle but with firm resolve, and a boundless capacity to extend love and care.

The day Candace disappeared was much like any other, although the details of this particular day are seared into Wilma’s memory. Candace left the house for school that morning in a light wool jacket, black with burgundy raglan sleeves, underdressed for the freezing weather, as teens are inclined to be. She was buzzing with excitement about a visit with her best friend, Heidi, who was going to arrive the following morning.

When Candace didn’t come home from school that afternoon at the usual time, Wilma and Cliff immediately knew something was wrong. Not only was their daughter a happy child with no propensity to run away, but she would never jeopardize the visit with Heidi, an occasion she had been anticipating for weeks. Cliff and Wilma, at this point both alarmed, bundled Odia and Syras into the car that late-November evening and drove through their neighbourhood for hours, first on familiar routes then those less travelled, peering through the foggy windows of the local 7-11, their search complicated by near whiteout conditions and early nightfall. Candace was nowhere to be found.

Upon their arrival home some hours later, Wilma breathlessly opened the front door – had Candace returned while they were out? The house was silent and empty. Cliff and Wilma, at this point beside themselves with worry, began making phone calls, from school officials to numbers scrawled in Candace’s address book, and filed a police report. After they exhausted all the options, Cliff went to bed in the middle of the night. Wilma stayed up until dawn, heart pounding, keeping vigil by the living room window facing the snowy street, hoping, praying, that her girl

would materialize. Candace didn’t come home that night.

The following morning, Cliff and Wilma received call after call from community members they had reached out to the night before – any news? – each conversation turning from tentative hope to fearful urgency. After breakfast, the phone rang yet again. This time it was Dave Loewen, the director of Camp Arnes, where Cliff worked at the time. Within hours of that call, Dave mobilized the shock, confusion, and fear into a volunteer search party and had spread word of Candace’s disappearance through Manitoba’s expansive Mennonite community.

As search efforts ramped up over the next few days, the story made its way across the country, in part due to its sensational and tragic nature (a child goes missing on her way home from school – a parent’s worst nightmare), and in part due to the massive city-wide response that followed. Candace’s family and friends, together with complete strangers who were moved by what they had learned about her through stories in the media, combed the streets of Winnipeg in organized search parties sanctioned by the police. Groups of volunteers hung posters featuring Candace’s sixth-grade school photo along with the urgent plea, “Have you seen Candace?” and tip lines overflowed with well-intentioned calls.

Casseroles, platters of dainties, and reams of cards and letters rained down upon a grateful but bereft Wilma and Cliff. The mail, enough to fill multiple boxes, came from parents who had lost their own children, teenagers who identified with Candace, seeing in her their own young lives, and from people who were touched by the Derksen’s story and simply wanted to wish the family well. For those who loved Candace, the public outpouring of support reflected her incredible ability to reach people, to connect, to know and be known.

On January 17, 1985, seven weeks after she disappeared, Candace’s body was found 450 meters from home, bound and tied in an abandoned shed. Police told Cliff and Wilma the case was being treated as first-degree murder. She was thirteen years old when she died.

The two parents drove home from the police station after identifying their daughter’s body, reeling. The word “murder” echoed in their minds, and the specter of trauma loomed large. Both parents knew instinctively it could destroy their lives. That same night, Cliff and Wilma, shattered and unable to go to bed, intentionally chose forgiveness over revenge. Wilma explains that while forgiveness is a key part of Mennonite faith and culture, it was really an act of self-preservation; she and Cliff knew that the horror of losing Candace in such a violent way could crush them.

This decision to choose forgiveness was the first of many the Derksens had to make quickly. Within days of Candace’s body being discovered, the family had to decide what colour of coffin to bury their daughter in, where to hold the service, which the funeral director warned would be too large for their home church, and where people could donate in lieu of flowers.

The answer to this last question came to Wilma almost immediately; Candace was a beautiful swimmer, at ease in the water, a total natural like her dad (the two had loved to frolic in the water together, diving and rolling like twin otters), and Camp Arnes had plans to build a pool. By the time the funeral took place, mere days later, a memorial fund in Candace’s honour was set up to raise money for the camp’s swimming pool. Donations poured in, and Cliff and Wilma saw the possibility of Candace bringing more good into a world she left too soon.



Candace’s favorite denim jacket.

Credit:
Kyle Thomas



The Derksen family used an RV as a space to gather and relax during court proceedings.

In the decades that followed, Cliff and Wilma became advocates for forgiveness and worked alongside multiple different organizations and programs serving victims of violent crime, sharing how they had survived such a shattering loss, honouring their daughter's memory, and building her legacy. For families who have suffered a homicide, the loss of a loved one is the first of many traumas, and the statistics around mental health, marriage, and the fallout of homicide are stark. Many, if not most, families will not stay together; their lives will be ravaged by the memories, the trauma, and ongoing interactions with the legal system.

Twenty-two years after Candace's body was found in that abandoned shed, a suspect was arrested and ultimately found guilty of second-degree murder. Prior to the arrest, the person who killed Candace could have been in line with the Derksen

family at the grocery store, riding a city bus, grabbing a coffee; out in the world, surrounded by more potential victims.

Wilma's sister drove her RV all the way from Vancouver so the family would have somewhere to spend time downtown while court proceedings were underway. As the Derksen family went through the court process, more than two decades after they lost Candace, and continued to meet and interact with other victims, Wilma began envisioning a safe place, an oasis near the law courts for families who had lost loved ones to violent crime.

The idea for Candace House, a place of refuge, was born. After all, Candace was a people person, she welcomed everyone. What better way to honour her than to have a house, the one she never got to create for herself, to shelter those in need. Candace's story was, at this point,

well known in Manitoba, and other organizations and groups the Derksens had worked with, including men serving time for violent crime, were eager to help bring Wilma's vision to life.

In 1999, the Derksen family, together with other founders - Victims' Voice, Stony Mountain Lifers' Pegasus Association (for men serving life sentences in the Stony Mountain Penitentiary), Lifeline Manitoba, and the John Howard Society of Manitoba - began the planning process and established The Candace Derksen Fund at Winnipeg Foundation. Because the positioning of this house was so intricate, the founders held a provincial consultation and considered many different locations before they found the right spot. In 2018, after nearly a decade of planning and countless hours of volunteer work, Candace House opened its doors and welcomed the first family.

The street-level space is bright and inviting, with sun streaming onto colourful handmade quilts, cozy sectional couches, and a long dining room table. Cecilly Hildebrand, who has been executive director of Candace House since the very beginning, greets me warmly, and it really does feel like I'm being welcomed into someone's living room. A glimpse of a concrete parkade, barely visible above the privacy screen covering most of the large west-facing window, serves as the sole reminder we are in a commercial building on Kennedy Street in downtown Winnipeg, the law courts a mere half block away.

After a tour of the space, which has several private rooms and two larger open areas equipped with kitchens and dining areas, Cecilly brings me a steaming cup of mint tea. Her passion for the work has been apparent from the minute I stepped in the door, and she brightly expounded on the benefits of a recent expansion as she showed me around, recounting moments where as many as half a dozen families have sought refuge and support through Candace House simultaneously.

Cecilly first met Wilma 15 years ago. She was finishing her undergraduate degree and ended up working with Wilma on a conference presentation

about what forgiveness looks like for family survivors of homicide. The two clicked, and shortly after the conference wrapped, Cecilly says she "received a message from Wilma, in that Wilma way, that said, 'if you're bored, I might have an idea.' That's all that she said! So, we met for coffee, and Wilma explained, 'Here's what we want to build, do you want to run it?!'" Cecilly, a self-professed builder brimming with sunny energy alongside a steely resolve, said yes. That fortuitous meeting started a long process of fundraising, planning, research, and development.



Wilma and Elder Betty Ross connect at a Candace House event.





Fast forward to today, Wilma's vision for Candace House is fully realized. The organization provides a space for families to have privacy, nourishment, and rest as they move through an incredibly challenging process, one that can last for many years, and in some cases, like the Derksen family, for decades. Cecilly explains that families are "totally exposed in the process of so much grief and trauma." In response to this, Cecilly and her staff have worked with the police and province to allow victims to make statements, receive their loved ones' belongings, attend virtual court, and meet with the Crown, all from Candace House.

Another crucial way Candace House helps families is by alleviating uncertainty and stress on the first day in court. Cecilly explains that instead of referring to the justice system,

"We call it a legal system, because you're not going to find justice here. Your loved one is not coming back, and there is no justice in that."



Candace House executive director Cecilly Hildebrandt has been with the organization since its inception.

She explains that the process is, for most, totally unfamiliar, which compounds an already stressful, grief-laden experience. "Families come in the morning and talk about the day with staff, go to court, and then come back at the end of the day and kind of take a deep breath so they can leave at least some of it here and go home without carrying all of the weight."

Aside from the cruel reality of losing someone in a violent way, there is a high likelihood that the perpetrator is out on bail. Families have run into the person who murdered their loved one in the bathroom at the courthouse, at the Tim Horton's on a court recess, or at a restaurant nearby while getting lunch. Candace House protects already traumatized families from many things, but perhaps most importantly, it spares them from having to look the person who killed their loved one in the eye while getting a coffee.

Throughout our interview, people move through Candace House. A victim support worker from the province takes a meeting in one room, families come through the front door, and staff return from the courts. The space is incredibly hardworking, the only one of its kind in Canada, an utterly unique place.

As I step out the front door of Candace House, I'm greeted by a rush of traffic, tall buildings cast long shadows on the sidewalk, and people hurry to their next destination; the contrast between the oasis inside and the downtown bustle is stark. I can see, so very clearly, how Candace House can hold people in pain, protect them, even just for a short period of time, from what can be a harsh world.

The Candace Derksen Fund is part of a legacy that honours Wilma's daughter, Candace, and her love for life and for others. This fund was established at Winnipeg Foundation in June 1999 by representatives of Candace's family, Victims' Voice, the Stony Mountain Lifers' Pegasus Association (for men serving life sentences at the Stony Mountain Penitentiary), Lifeline Manitoba, and the John Howard Society of Manitoba. The fund has been providing support to organizations, starting with the Candace Derksen Pool at Camp Arnes, since 2005, marking more than 20 years of community support.

Number Of Gifts Made To The Fund Since 1999

139

Grantees Since 2005

- Camp Arnes - Candace Derksen Pool
- Candace House
- Canadian Centre for Child Protection
- Mennonite Church Canada
- John Howard Society

GOOD FOOD CLUB

Open To All

By Michel Durand-Wood, Community Booster, Civic Educator, and Author of You'll Pay for This: How we can afford a great city for everyone, forever

What if food is more than food? What if food is mental health, family, community, love? What if food is marriage, even?

These were questions I didn't even know I had until my meeting with Kelly Frazer, the Executive Director of the West Broadway Community Organization (WBCO). It's a crisp April morning, and Kelly is walking me through the ins-and-outs of the Good Food Club, the neighbourhood food security program they've been running for over 20 years.

She's quick to point out that it's called a "club" for a reason. Developed by the community, for the community, people felt like "they needed better access to healthy foods... but more than that, they wanted a place where they could feel included, and like they had a sense of ownership," relates Kelly.

In the last year alone, the Good Food Club distributed 1,341 Good Food Boxes and provided \$51,900 in Farmer's Market Food Currency to people in the neighbourhood

"The need has doubled in the last five years," explains Ailene Deller, Director of the Good Food Club. "Food prices are going up, all prices are going up... we're seeing lots of folks, lots of families, newcomers, and especially seniors that are really hurting for that good healthy food."

Ailene is one of the Club's two staff running the program, with significant input and hands-on work from volunteers who collectively provided over 900 hours of their time to the Club last year. "We wouldn't be able to run Good Food Club without high volunteer involvement," says Kelly.

Volunteers earn "sweat points" they can redeem for deep discounts on Good Food Boxes. It's a system that Kelly says encourages people to get more involved, increases capacity for the program, and gives folks a feeling of ownership. Duties are

varied and can include packing and distributing food boxes, setting up for events, and in the summer, helping out at the West Broadway Farmer's Market, which is entirely set up and taken down by volunteers. The people benefiting from the program are quite literally involved in shaping it, ensuring that it continues to meet the community's evolving needs.

The "club" format has also given it a much more holistic approach, by looking at everything that goes into our bodies, not just food. Often when talking about mental health supports, the focus is on the services people need once they're already in crisis. But the Good Food Club aims to provide upstream solutions by answering the question: what do we need to do to keep people healthy so they don't end up in a crisis?

As Kelly shares, "We're just looking at all the things that you need to keep your body and your mind healthy." And that includes access to healthy food, of course, but also things like social connection, mental

stimulation, and belonging. It's why the Club hosts all kinds of different activities, like field trips, to allow people a chance to get to know each other, and build community, which are important for both physical and mental health.

And the connections don't stop at the individual level either. The WBCO has also long worked with other community groups, such as the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre, Direct Farm Manitoba, the 26 organizations of the West Broadway Directors Network, and Gordon Bell High School.

It's for Gordon Bell that they received a \$25,500 grant from The Winnipeg Foundation, to allow them to work collaboratively on food security, as the school community had noticed a growing need for families there. While the school has a Universal Food Program, providing free breakfast and lunch, they knew that some families were having difficulty accessing food in the evenings, on the weekends, and during the summer.



The collaboration resulted in providing food hampers to families during the school year, but also helped identify a lack of data: the school recognized a need existed but, didn't have any way of knowing to what extent. So the Good Food Club worked with students on their own food security project: helping to develop an anonymous student survey to assess the school community's food security needs.

That experience has been really valuable, according to Kelly. Good Food Club members are generally adults, with children being served indirectly. But having the chance for direct input from youth has helped them gain different perspectives. For example, youth didn't like the idea of asking people if they're hungry, they wanted different wording. "Youth are really sensitive to the idea that their peers don't want stigma attached to coming from food-insecure households," explains Kelly. "They don't want to shame anyone."

Ailene agrees. "They're so great to work with, so smart, so on the ball." Regarding the survey they're working on together, she jokes, "They're going to go through it with us to make sure it's not too cringey for them."

While the initiative is for this school year only, the connections that have been made will enable them to continue working together well into the future, deepening those community ties, as the neighbourhood youth eventually become the neighbourhood adults.

Creating relationships is such a key component of the Good Food Club. Often, one of the biggest barriers to eating healthy foods is, if you haven't grown up eating them, how do you even know how to prepare them? Peer guidance becomes an important piece of the puzzle. The community that's formed enables the sharing of that knowledge, by trading recipes and cooking or baking tips. But it goes beyond

that, to helping out with shovelling or bringing some baking for a neighbour who may have injured their wrist, for example.

"The community members, the volunteers, they really become almost like family. A lot of them are very, very close after years of volunteering together," says Kelly. "It's building community, but it's almost like building family for people."

And sometimes that family building is quite literal, as Club participants who volunteered together all these years may find their bond goes much deeper. "We actually had a wedding at the Farmer's Market this summer," says Kelly.



Good Food Club volunteers Mara Tolks and Adriana Varela packing up food hampers.



"Community work can be hard. There's a lot of stuff that we deal with that's tough. We see some people that have been through some terrible things, but I feel like Good Food Club is always a beacon."



Good Food Club volunteer Mitzi Claudio working alongside other caring community members to get food to those who need it.

Playing —



One Trunk Theatre Club Keeping Kids Creative and Engaged

At a time of year when attention spans are shrinking and excitement about summer is growing, the Grade 1 students at École Provencher received some very special visitors.

Last June, local performing arts company One Trunk Theatre (OTT) brought its Future Adventure Club to the school, located in Winnipeg’s St. Boniface neighbourhood. Winnipeg Foundation provided \$15,000 to OTT through its Community Grant program to make the theatrical workshop series possible.

Part drama education, part immersive performance and imaginative play, the Future Adventure Club asked students, “What do you want your future world to look like?”

Once a week, a trio of OTT actors visited the school in character as time travellers from a settlement on Mars in the year 3,000. Their time machine broke down, they said, and until they could get it fixed and return home, the trio needed the students to teach them about 2025 and their visions for the future.

Each session began with a 10-minute sketch to set up that day’s activity. One of the goals was to gather source material for future OTT projects, but another key goal was to create a show each session with the students’ participation.

“Our practice when we work with kids is to make them the experts and full collaborators right away,” says Andraea Sartison, founder and co-artistic producer at OTT. “Anything you could imagine, anything you could wish to see, anything that would blow your mind in school, we tried to do it.”



Actors bring Future Adventure Club to Ecole Provencher School.

Photo courtesy of One Trunk Theatre.

— Around

OTT did a one-month Future Adventure Club residency in three Grade 1 classrooms and led shorter versions of the workshop during the summer with community organizations such as Art City, the non-profit that provides free art programming in West Broadway.

If the feedback OTT received is any indication, the Future Adventure Club was a success.

“It was really fun and exciting,” one student said. “I hope they come back!”

“They brought so much fun, joy, and wonder to the classroom,” added a teacher. “Everyone was engaged. (But) ‘engaged’ isn’t a strong enough word. Everyone was completely spellbound and hanging on their every move, every word, every note. It was the absolute highlight of our school year.”

Sartison and her colleagues couldn’t have been happier.

“We’re always trying to find a balance where we’re making something that’s just as fun for them as it is for us,” she says.

The Future Adventure Club is a prime example of OTT’s work. The company’s mandate is to present new interdisciplinary theatrical work that is created collaboratively; innovation and community are among its core values. The company is committed to advancing theatre as an art form while engaging diverse artists and audiences across Manitoba.

Originally from Calgary, Sartison earned a degree in theatre and Scandinavian studies at the University of Alberta’s Camrose campus. She started OTT in 2012, not long after moving to Winnipeg to be with her partner.

“We ask the question: What else can theatre be?” Sartison says of the company. “I think we’re asking that through some pretty massive projects, even though One Trunk isn’t full-time for us.”



The Martian and the Mound was performed for audiences in Neuberghal, Morden and Winnipeg last fall.

Photo courtesy of One Trunk Theatre.



Throughout the last 14 years, OTT has created or produced more than 50 new works. That includes 25 “micro-productions” the company produced during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of “Knock Knock Ginger” – a socially distant, outdoor, live theatre series.

OTT commissioned more than two dozen new 10- to 15-minute plays over the course of 18 months. They were created and performed by people from the same household, with performances taking place on the audience’s front lawn while they watched through their window.

Winnipeggers could book a free show through OTT’s website. Each soundless, family-friendly play was performed at 30 houses throughout the city.

More recently, OTT staged *The Martian* and *The Mound*, which the company described as a time-bending, prairie-rooted theatrical romp that follows Dr. Phoenix Albright, an archaeologist from Mars, as they investigate a mysterious “pull” beneath a Manitoba mound.

Albright travels through pivotal moments in the region’s past in a play that asks: In the eyes of history, what makes a moment worth remembering?

OTT hosted a series of workshops in schools and community centres throughout southern Manitoba over the course of two years, doing theatre with – and interviewing – approximately 100 community members. OTT members spoke with participants about their region, collected the material, and Sartison wrote *The Martian* and *The Mound* using those contributions.

A creative team of 20 people, including community actors between the ages 11 and 60, staged the play in Neuberghthal, Morden, and Winnipeg last fall. Each performance included live instrumentation from two musicians, who developed the score specifically for the production.

The play included a message conveyed by workshop participants time and time again.

“(Dr. Phoenix Albright) learns that Manitoba is beautiful, even if it’s simple,” Sartison says. “That’s the theme our collaborators in southern Manitoba wanted to share.”

OTT currently has a number of projects in development and hopes to bring the Future Adventure Club to more schools. Sartison is grateful for the grant from The Winnipeg Foundation that made the Future Adventure Club’s pilot year possible.

“Winnipeg Foundation has been a great partner of ours over the years because I think they understand the value of that community-based programming,” she says. “It doesn’t feel like when we work with The Foundation that we have to lie about who we are or what we’re doing. They’re a well-aligned partner with a similar goal, and they give us the freedom to play.”

Sartison invokes her favourite quote, from the short story “Babette’s Feast” by Danish author Karen Blixen: “Through all the world there goes one long cry from the heart of the artist: Give me leave to do my utmost.”

“I think about that a lot,” Sartison says. “All we want to do is make the work. We just want to be trusted to do our job, and I feel with that funding for the Future Adventure Club project, we could do that.”

Keeping Culture Alive, One Story at a Time



Lögberg-Heimskringla Connects Manitoba’s Icelandic Community

By Nolan Bicknell

For nearly 140 years, Lögberg-Heimskringla has been a steady thread connecting people, stories, and traditions across generations. First published in 1886, the newspaper continues to serve as a gathering place for Manitoba’s Icelandic community, honouring heritage while adapting to modern needs.

“It’s one of the oldest and longest-running ethnic newspapers, I believe, in Canada and close to one of the oldest in North America,” says Karen Botting, President of the Board. “The purpose of the newspaper has really been to keep the Icelandic community connected and keep us informed.”



In its earliest days, the paper filled a vital role. “It started out different. It was more like news to keep in touch in the 1880s. That’s the only way they communicated,” Botting explains. “They didn’t have all the technology we have today.” While technology has transformed how people share information, the heart of the publication remains the same. “Technology certainly changed things up for us, but now it’s to keep us connected.”

That sense of connection is especially important for the modest Manitoba community. “With our Icelandic community, which is very small and also connected with Iceland... just to keep that heritage and culture going,” says Botting. “It’s also as a way of building community.”

Through its pages, Lögborg-Heimskringla reflects both past and present. It shares community milestones, family stories, and history alongside updates from Iceland.

The paper reflects values that have shaped the Icelandic community over time. “I think our culture has always focused on education, literacy, equality... those kinds of values have been a strong part of the Icelandic community, and it’s something that I think we like to maintain,” Botting says. Even as Icelanders built new lives in Canada, they carried their traditions with them. “They came, they were patriotic to Canada, but they maintained their patriotism also to Iceland because they wanted to maintain that culture.”

That dual sense of belonging continues today, expressed not only through the newspaper, but through active participation in community life. “Even though we’re very small, you’ll see that a lot of people in the Icelandic community participate very widely and broadly... in all aspects of the community,” Botting notes.



At the centre of this participation is volunteerism. The newspaper itself is sustained by people giving their time and talents. “One of the ways we build community through the paper is not just by reading the paper... it’s getting people involved in the newspaper and all kinds of volunteer aspects,” she says. “Our board is volunteer. We have a number of committees that are volunteer committees... we have volunteers that help us on events.”

These shared efforts strengthen relationships and create a sense of common purpose. “That way we all connect as a community for a common goal.”

Support from Winnipeg Foundation has helped sustain that work and keep the community strong. “We do appreciate the support of the Winnipeg Foundation,” says Botting. “The Foundation, the endowment, the ability to apply for different grants... that has been very positive for us.”

This support helps ensure that cultural connections continue to grow. “Keeping communities alive... I think that’s really important,” she says. “I think this is helping keep our community alive, informed, and connected.” With support from the Winnipeg Foundation, Lögborg-Heimskringla is developing a short documentary to celebrate its role as a heritage institution and strengthen connections within the Icelandic community.

Looking ahead, Botting sees a future that honours tradition while welcoming change. “I see Lögborg sustaining for a while and I think it’s going to change,” she says. “You always want to keep refreshing... getting younger people involved.”

That renewal is already underway. “There’s a whole group of younger people... and a lot of them are becoming more interested in the paper,” she notes, pointing to a new generation stepping into leadership and participation.

At its core, Lögberg-Heimskringla remains a community effort, one that depends on people sharing their voices, time, and stories. Botting encourages others to take part. “Anybody that’s of Icelandic descent and is interested in their heritage might want to give us a try,” she says. “We’d love to hear your stories.”

Those contributions become part of something lasting. “Eventually, these stories will become a part of Tímarit, so they become a permanent document,” she explains. Tímarit is an open-access digital library and archive that hosts millions of newspapers from Iceland and Greenland, and the Lögberg-Heimskringla’s full historical library will be immortalized there as well. “If you have some interesting stories about your family or your history, we’d love for you to participate.”

Through shared stories and volunteer energy, Lögberg-Heimskringla continues to do what it has always done: bring people together, strengthen culture, and help a community stay connected across generations.



 Karen Botting, president of Lögberg-Heimskringla's board of directors.

THE COMMUNITY FUND IS HERE FOR GOOD

The Community Fund is built to support our city forever. It ensures there will always be resources available to meet emerging needs, strengthen communities, and adapt as Winnipeg grows.

What makes the Community Fund unique is its flexibility. It supports all our responsive grants, including Community Grants, Children and Youth and Program Grants, Major Capital Grants, and Multi-Year Grants. Because gifts are unrestricted, they can offer support at crucial times where the need is greatest.

This flexibility matters in a changing city. It allows charities to respond to the needs of families, children, and neighbourhoods in real time, making decisions based on what community members are experiencing on the ground.

The Community Fund supports strategic work focused on some of Winnipeg’s most pressing challenges: helping prevent entry into the child welfare system, improving outcomes for those children already in the system, and supporting youth as they transition out of care. It also invests in Winnipeg’s downtown Community Area for Revitalization and Equity (CARE), where community organizations are addressing poverty, homelessness, and addiction with deep local knowledge and compassion.

This trust-based giving is powerful because it recognizes that communities understand their own needs and are best positioned to act on them. Whether you make a one-time or recurring gift, or establish a named fund, your generosity supports urgent needs while investing in long-term solutions, helping transform community well-being, now and forever.

A gift to the Community Fund makes all this possible, helping build a stronger, more caring Winnipeg.

It Takes a Village

For Every Family Initiative Provides Support Across the City

By Beth Schellenberg



When Carey Anderson received word that they had been selected as the new executive director for Acorn Family Place, they could hardly believe their luck. “I love it,” Carey exclaims, “I pinch myself most days thinking, is this real? Am I really in this role?”

Acorn Family Place (Acorn), located just off Broadway Ave. on Furby St., has a large, bright atrium ringed by rooms and areas dedicated to different activities—from laundry to cooking class to early childhood education. It is a hub of support and connection for young families facing a variety of difficulties, with poverty being an overarching challenge. The space is warm, with thriving plants, including a potted flower nodding in the sunshine in the craft area, children’s art adorning every available surface, and plenty of cozy nooks to relax in.

On any given morning at Acorn, the front doors open and close in a steady rhythm as families arrive. Staff greet people by name and offer coffee and snacks. For Carey, this is exactly where they want to be.

“The community and the families and the children that we support are just beautiful, beautiful humans,” they say. “And I feel very honoured to be able to be part of that community.”

Acorn is one of 24 Family Resource Centres across Winnipeg supported through the For Every Family Initiative, a United Way Winnipeg project supported by Winnipeg Foundation, rooted in the belief that a family should receive support before their situation devolves into crisis. Early access to community, resources, and support helps families stay together and build towards the future they imagine for themselves.

“We are a place where we want to support families to be able to connect, build community, develop skills, and be empowered,” Carey explains. “We just want to support families to thrive, whatever that looks like for them.” For many families, that begins with meeting immediate needs like access to diapers, infant formula, and emergency food kits, or simply the ability to do a load of laundry in a welcoming space. Most families who come through Acorn’s doors are navigating poverty, and the ability to access these supports without stigma can make a meaningful difference.

The support offered is both practical and relationship-based, grounded in the knowledge that isolation can be as challenging as material hardship. “The For Every Family Initiative funding really helps provide those opportunities for families and caregivers to reduce their isolation, build connections, and learn from one another,” Carey says.



Photo courtesy of: Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism / Photo by Mike Peters



“Having a place where they can come, have a coffee, and connect, it matters.”

Family Resource Centres, which can be found across the city, meet families without judgment, and with an understanding that each person arrives with their own story, their own challenges, and their own strengths. The For Every Family Initiative builds on this approach at a city-wide level, strengthening a network of community centres, extending hours, expanding programming, and coordinating resources so that families can access support when they most need it, in a place where they already feel a sense of belonging.

The impact of this work is evident anecdotally and experientially, but also in the numbers. Between 2021 and 2024, Family Resource Centres helped reunify 87 families and prevented 357 families from having their children enter the child welfare system. These numbers reflect not only intervention but also prevention, and the quiet, ongoing work of keeping families together.



Carey Anderson, Acorn Family Place executive director.

At Acorn, one of the most significant ways this support takes shape is through the wraparound team, a group focused on working alongside families at risk of Child and Family Services involvement or already navigating that system. “For Every Family is now funding a position and a half of staff in our wraparound team,” Carey explains.

This work often focuses on building relationships and trust, and on connecting with parents to understand their unique needs and the barriers they face. It can involve accompanying families through complex systems, offering guidance, and creating spaces where relationships can be rebuilt. In some cases, that means

providing a setting for family visits that feels more like a home than an office. At Acorn, Carey explains, families can meet in a licensed playroom rather than in a formal CFS environment, providing “a warmer, safer space.”

This kind of safe space can create room for new connections to form, and for new family structures and relationships to emerge. Conversations can unfold more naturally, and families can begin the work of repair in an environment that feels supportive rather than clinical. Carey believes this “more relaxed environment for families to connect and work on relationships” provides better outcomes.





Each year, Acorn organizes outings for families, creating opportunities for shared experiences that might otherwise be out of reach. “Our team supports folks with going to sweats and going medicine picking,” Carey says. “In the summer, we always go to Tinkertown. We close the centre and load up a couple of buses, 30 or 40 families.” For a day, the pressures of daily life recede, replaced by laughter, fun, and the simple pleasure of being together. These experiences are central to Acorn’s work, offering families a way to connect with culture, community, and with one another.

Acorn also supports families in building toward long-term stability. Through a social enterprise catering program, parents have the opportunity to gain experience in a commercial kitchen, receive training, and

earn income, all while their children are cared for on-site. “They get paid, they get all the training, and at the same time they can get their kids taken care of,” Carey explains. For many parents, access to childcare is one of the most significant barriers to employment. Removing that barrier opens pathways that might otherwise remain out of reach.

This combination of immediate support and long-term opportunity reflects the broader vision of the For Every Family Initiative, which is to create conditions in which families can move forward together with confidence. Before initiatives like this, support for families was often offered through piecemeal services and programs at scattered locations. “Prior to the funding, there were significant gaps in terms of person-centred supports,” Carey reflects.

Today, those gaps are being addressed through collaboration among community organizations, funders, and government partners, each contributing to a more coordinated and responsive system of care. It is, in many ways, a collective effort that reflects a shared understanding that supporting families is not the work of any one organization alone.

Across Winnipeg, through the For Every Family Initiative, that work is carried forward by the belief that when families are supported, entire communities are strengthened.



For Every Family: By the Numbers

The For Every Family Initiative is a collaborative investment in families across Winnipeg—bringing together philanthropy, government, and community organizations.

Launched by United Way Winnipeg, it supports a network of 24 Family Resource Centres that provide preventative, low-barrier services to families across the city. Winnipeg Foundation has supported

the initiative, which aligns with the Foundation’s goal of reducing the number of children entering care and strengthening outcomes for youth aging out of the system, since its inception in 2016. In the years since, For Every Family has grown steadily, demonstrating that early, community-based support can reduce system involvement, strengthen families, and build healthier communities.

Funding Model:

- Total annual budget: \$3.6 million, with a goal to grow to \$4.58 million
- The Province of Manitoba matches philanthropic donations, recently increasing its commitment to \$2 million annually (2025–2028)
- Winnipeg Foundation has committed up to \$1 million per year (2025–2027) to help expand the program

Impact from 2021–2024:

- 87 families reunified
- 357 families were prevented from entering the child welfare system
- 4,500+ family interactions
- 400,000+ visits to Family Resource Centres in one year alone



NOT JUST FOR *KICKS*

Inner-City Karate Program Gives Kids Confidence, Teaches Resiliency

Sensei Alan Taylor, who holds a 4th degree black belt in Shotokan karate, shares several memories from the 10-plus years he’s spent teaching karate to poverty-challenged, inner-city youth in Winnipeg, but one stands out the most.

Sensei Taylor recalls when Rainier Villanueva, age 10, joined The Y-Not? Inner-City Karate Program in the Axworthy Health and RecPlex in 2017—a program operated by MacKinnon’s Y-Not? Anti-Poverty Program Inc., a grassroots charity.

Over the next three years, Rainier worked his way from a white belt (the first belt in karate’s ranking system) to a brown belt (the seventh belt, and one of three levels before black). Rainier was a competent and consistent student, Sensei Taylor recalls, but he still struggled, as most youngsters do.

When the COVID-19 pandemic reached Manitoba, Sensei Taylor took to teaching the classes online. It was then that Rainier hit his growth spurt and Sensei Taylor started noticing the difference in his abilities.

“It’s almost like a light switch came on,” Sensei Taylor recalls. “He went from struggling to looking amazing. I was shocked. This was a night-and-day difference.”

Rainier returned to in-person classes in 2022 and earned his black belt two years later. Only then did Rainier’s mother tell Sensei Taylor that Rainier had chronic kidney disease, and that he passed his black belt test with only one kidney that was functioning at 20 per cent.



More impressive than Rainier’s physical abilities, Sensei Taylor adds, is the fact that Rainier committed to earning his black belt even after failing his first black-belt test—a common experience for many attempting the Shodan test for the first time.

After accepting the disappointment of his first attempt, Rainier showed perseverance and determination, and he was successful in his second attempt.

That kind of perseverance is one of the things Sensei Taylor tries to teach each student in the program.

No matter how long participants stick with karate, he believes the program is fruitful so long as they get something out of it that improves their life in some way.

“If I had any sort of impact on their choices to graduate high school and

be positive with themselves, that’s a success,” he says.

Improving young people’s lives through physical activity has been the goal at MacKinnon’s Y-Not? Anti-Poverty Program since Brian MacKinnon began its predecessor, The R.B. Russell Downtown Y Program, in 2002, sending thousands of inner-city youth and hundreds of families to the YMCA-YWCA since then.

The organization focuses on providing inner-city youth with accessible, community-based recreational programming in safe, structured spaces so that they can build confidence, discipline and social connections.

MacKinnon, who taught at R.B. Russell Vocational High School, practiced karate as far back as the 1960s, achieving his brown belt in 1975, and a black belt in 2005.

At the beginning of 2016, he had a dream to start The Y-Not? Inner-City Karate Program. That dream became a reality when he met with Sensei Taylor, who agreed to come

on board as chief instructor. Sensei Taylor began teaching students that February.

Today, Sensei Taylor runs the program every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with two back-to-back classes each evening. Sensei Warren Hoto-mani, who achieved his black belt in spite of losing an arm to cancer, assists him.

The classes are highly physical, with a balanced focus on basic techniques, partner work that includes combative drills, physical and performance-based conditioning, and kata—a prearranged pattern of choreographed offensive and defensive movements, specific to each belt level.

At the end of every class, they repeat a philosophy known as Dojo Kun that captures the spirit of karate training, reinforcing self-control, self-discipline, and the drive for constant improvement: “Seek perfection of character. Be faithful. Endeavour to excel. Respect others. Refrain from violent behaviour.”

The program is open to anyone who is 10 years old or older. MacKinnon’s Y-Not? Anti-Poverty Program provides everything free of charge, including instruction, uniforms, belts, equipment, snacks, access to special guest instructors and seminars through the World Traditional Karate Organization, and a year-end class and picnic that allows families to celebrate participants’ accomplishments.

The annual cost to run the karate program is around \$20,000, but the value is easily four times that, says Margaret Shaw-MacKinnon, executive director of MacKinnon’s Y-Not? Anti-Poverty Program (whose husband is Brian). Karate would be otherwise unaffordable for participants.

Winnipeg Foundation has provided generous grants over many years to the charity. Last year, The Foundation provided an \$8,000 Community Grant along with donor directed funds to support the karate program.

“We sing the praises of the Winnipeg Foundation, other long-time donors such as Richard Bird and Dave Johnston, and our board members, Ross Robinson and Bill Cannon, who have

contributed to this wonderful Y-Not? structure that exists within the community to assist people in poverty in so many ways,” Shaw-MacKinnon says.

“In addition to karate,” she adds, “MacKinnon’s Y-Not? Anti-Poverty Program distributes \$20,000 of emergency groceries annually and thousands of dollars’ worth of hoodies and granola bars to schools. The charity has served more than 50 schools and off-campus programs over the years.”

Karate training increases students’ self-confidence and self-discipline, while adding to physical and mental health in an atmosphere that encourages inclusion, camaraderie, and achieving one’s personal best.

“Brian and Alan are truly dedicated to the wellbeing of their participants,” says Shaw-MacKinnon, noting that while Brian’s stepped away from the

charity’s day-to-day operations, he still serves as an advisor. “It’s uplifting to see that kind of commitment to the well-being of the community.”

The MacKinnon family—including Brian and Margaret’s adult children, Eve (on projects), Arthur and Olivia (fieldwork)—has served and volunteered, as have a community of loyal donors, principals, teachers, counsellors, recreation facility administrators, families in poverty, occasional project assistants, all-important accountants, and more.

The organization plans to keep contributing to the community for years to come.

“There is an ongoing charitable need for help in Winnipeg’s inner city, so MacKinnon’s Y-Not? Anti-Poverty Program reaches out with assistance,” Shaw-MacKinnon says.

“In a world of such suffering and troubles, I consider it a great privilege to be able to do good works and make a difference in the lives of at-risk, in-need youth, and families in poverty in Winnipeg. Brian so beautifully set the stage for these good works to continue.”





 Counter clockwise from top: Elizabeth Dela Cruz, her mom Karen, and Melissa Suggitt.

Special Olympics Bowling

By Kevin Rollason

Elizabeth Dela Cruz doesn't leave many bowling pins standing when she rolls a ball down a lane—and she has a Special Olympics gold medal to prove it. But the chance to win gold isn't why Dela Cruz, a 22-year-old Winnipegger, first picked up a five-pin bowling ball about four years ago. She did it to meet new friends, stay fit, have fun, and try something new.

"I have lots of bowling friends," said Dela Cruz, who lives with autism spectrum disorder and pervasive developmental disorder. "I like the people and I feel I'm very good—it's a fun sport." Dela Cruz, who won gold in her bowling division at the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Calgary in 2024, personifies the decades-old motto for Special Olympics: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

Dela Cruz, and 236 other bowlers in the city's Special Olympics program are able to go bowling weekly, from about September to April each year, thanks to a grant from the Winnipeg Foundation. The Foundation provided a \$30,000 grant last year to support the organization's local bowling program.

Melissa Suggitt, Special Olympics Manitoba's director of marketing and communications, said the grant is essential to help cover the costs to

rent lanes at bowling alleys and pay for equipment.

"Support from The Winnipeg Foundation is what helps keep financial barriers low to get more athletes into these programs,"

Suggitt said. "We are the only non-profit which provides sport programming specifically for people with an intellectual disability, and bowling is one of our higher cost programs to offer."

Suggitt said Special Olympics Manitoba has been around since 1980 and bowling was one of its original sports. It currently runs 17 five-pin and five tenpin programs, in both competitive and recreational pathways, across the province. She said participation is free for the athletes who range in age from eight to their seventies. "Bowling is one of our most accessible sports," Suggitt said. "Every age can participate, every skill level, people of all abilities and backgrounds. That's why it is our most popular sport and we have quite a waiting list. We really do rely on support of the community and foundations, like the Winnipeg Foundation, to help break down those financial barriers."

Suggitt said competitive tenpin bowlers can work to compete at both national and international Special Olympics, while five-pin athletes go to the Canada games because that sport isn't as well known in other countries. But Suggitt said bowlers can also come out simply to play and socialize in a fun inclusive environment at a recreational level during the long winter months.

She said there are many benefits to playing sports. "The athletes are 49 per cent less likely to suffer from depression when compared to their peers with an intellectual disability," she said. "You're seeing that direct mental health benefit, physical health, the social aspect, the community aspect—it really is an impactful, meaningful community that we've built here in Winnipeg and across the province. And that's not done without people like The Winnipeg Foundation believing in us."

As for Dela Cruz, her mother Karen says she was not only busy this winter bowling, but she is now taking on another sport—basketball.

"That could also lead to a provincial team," the mother said. "She is going to keep doing her best and being with the community."

Oshki-Giizhig – Living the Promise of a New Day

Holistic Cultural Support for Those Living with Intellectual Disabilities

By Nolan Bicknell

On a weekday morning on Princess St, in the Exchange District of downtown Winnipeg, people drift into Oshki-Giizhig for coffee, conversation, and community. In this beautiful space, participants are welcomed with kindness at the front door. “This is our 11th year in operation,” says Mark Granger, Director of Collaboration and Initiatives at Oshki-Giizhig. “We started in 2014 because although most supports may have been serving Indigenous people, [they did so] without Indigenous knowledge. Community needed something different.”

Oshki is an Indigenous-based non-profit with holistic supports for folks living with intellectual disabilities, including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Services are developed on a case-by-case basis, with a focus on enhancing spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being. As Granger mentioned, Oshki-Giizhig began in 2014, running outreach services out of Thunderbird House with an initial \$30,000 grant. Its two founders, Eric Friesen and the late Grant Duncan, were guided by many partners and

community members, including Knowledge Keeper Larry Monkman. Friesen and Duncan had both been working in the disability services sector, but there were gaps when it came to implementing Indigenous knowledge and culture. Monkman gifted the name. “Oshki-Giizhig means ‘new day’ in Ojibwe,” says Granger. “With intellectual disability, every day is kind of a new day. You might need repetition to build skills, but you also start fresh. Yesterday doesn’t decide who you are today.”



Photos courtesy of
Oshki-Giizhig

That “new day” idea shows up in how the team works. Early on, folks said they needed rental history and access to affordable housing. Oshki-Giizhig responded with supported independent living through their Wiigiwaam housing support program. From there, services kept building and now include assisting people with acquiring IDs, booking appointments, navigating rental lease agreements, helping with job hunts, and other daily tasks that can seem deceptively simple. “Loving relationships and a reintegration of community, culture, and spirituality. Those things go a long way,” says Granger. “When you belong, you can begin again.”

Granger has grown with the organization since he started in 2015, where he initially focused on housing. He moved through outreach, casework, and program leadership, and now, in his new role as Director of Collaboration and Initiatives, focuses on partnerships while expanding Oshki’s scope of care and increasing its range of services based on the needs of its community. The learning never stops. “These people are going to teach you more than any class,” he recalls Monkman telling him during his first days back at Thunderbird House. Granger smiles. “And he was right.”

Listening to participants is a core aspect of the job, which has sparked bigger dreams for the organization. Granger describes a plan, imagined by many together, of land-based addiction treatment that starts with cultural teachings every day and stays with people when they return to the city. “We asked, ‘What would we do if we could do anything?’ A central lodge, daily ceremony, teachings, community... getting at the root of issues, like attachment and intergenerational trauma, not just the triggers,” he says. With continued support and the right partners,

hopeful ideas like this can become reality.

Not every day is easy. The community has carried deep losses since the pandemic—overdoses, violence, the death of founder Grant Duncan in 2021. Staff have expanded their own circles of care to keep going. “We watch out for each other,” says Granger. “Coffee, check-ins, circles. It’s always just so much learning. About systems, about ourselves, and about how to hold on to love in hard times.”

Through it all, Oshki-Giizhig keeps faith with its name. People walk in after a rough night and ask for a ride, a phone call, a conversation, a smudge, a hand up. They are met with patience, and a specific, holistic plan is developed. Every individual is different, and every situation requires a different approach, though there are some shared experiences.

In his new role, Granger is hoping to grow collaborations with First Nations across Manitoba, to share what works in Winnipeg with communities across the province.

“We’ve learned a lot together,” he says. “We can keep learning with others.”

Donors, community, and partners help Oshki-Giizhig welcome each “new day” with care and compassion. Cultural teachings guide everything they do. Relationships are at the centre of the work, and more neighbours are finding their place in the circle.

Oshki-Giizhig received a 2025 Multi-Year Grant of \$150,000 per year for 4 years (\$600,000 total)

MURRAY SINCLAIR MEMORIAL FUND



Artists In Healthcare Manitoba Funds
Indigenous Music Program

By Kevin Rollason

Murray Sinclair was many things in life—a trailblazing judge, chief commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, senator, husband, father, and grandfather. But Sinclair also loved music, especially live music, and in the last weeks of his life, a musician with a guitar would regularly come into his hospital room to play songs to calm him as he edged closer to being welcomed by his ancestors at the lodge in the West.

Sinclair was 73 when he passed away on Nov. 4, 2024, and, to honour his memory and legacy, his family created the Murray Sinclair Memorial Fund at the Winnipeg Foundation. The fund received gifts from both Sinclair’s family and people across the country and around the world.

Sinclair’s family is now hoping the same program which brought him so much comfort in his final days will be received by more Indigenous people during their stays in Winnipeg hospitals. During each of the next four years, \$10,000 will go from the Murray Sinclair Memorial Fund to Artists in Healthcare Manitoba to support its Indigenous Health Music Program. It means the program will be able to provide another 250 hours of live music annually.

Sinclair’s daughter, Dené, said the music program is “really amazing.”

She said her dad benefited from a program which, during what can be a vulnerable and worrying time, sees musicians come into hospital to play music for Indigenous patients.

Sinclair spent his final four months in hospital and during that time the music program’s Quinton Don Poitras brought both comfort and his guitar into his room. Their shared love of music blossomed into a friendship and Poitras continued to play for Sinclair, even when he entered intensive care.

“It was really beautiful to see how this connection between music lovers could bring so much comfort, at a time when it was most needed,” Dené said.

Shirley Grierson, executive director of Artists in Healthcare Manitoba, said the music program was established around 2004, but the program specifically for Indigenous patients being treated at St. Boniface and the Health Sciences Centre, began in 2024, after receiving a \$25,000 founding gift from Winnipeg Foundation.

“I was looking at healthcare and community and saying ‘wait a minute, why aren’t we addressing something specific for the Indigenous community when they are in hospital?’” Grierson said. “A lot of people are coming from rural Manitoba and maybe they don’t have as many friends and family visiting.”

Grierson said the Artists in Healthcare Manitoba program has always played for all patients, including ones from the Indigenous community, but this program was created to meet the specific needs of the Indigenous community, including having Indigenous musicians. Patients are connected with the program through the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority’s Indigenous Health Patient Services.

“Our job is to serve the patient and to provide support,” she said. “We aren’t proselytizing about the organization, or talking about who we are. The job of these musicians is just to come in and play for people, that’s it.”

Grierson said they are thankful to the Sinclair family for the gift because it all goes to pay professional musicians for the hours they play for patients. “This is huge for us,” she said. “This means more patients will have more music visits. It is pretty significant.”



*Photo supplied by
Artists in Healthcare*



GIFT OF TIME

Mae Junke is a passionate volunteer who received the 2026 Mayor’s Volunteer Service Award through Volunteer Manitoba.

Mae is a proud Métis woman from Treaty 1 territory, driven by a strong desire to make a meaningful impact on her community. She has been a mentor and tutor with CanU, a Winnipeg-based charitable organization offering mentorship and educational enrichment programs for youth, for three years and is also a member of the Indigenous Circle of Empowerment leadership group on the University of Manitoba campus. We sat down with Mae to talk about her volunteer journey.

WF: How did you begin your journey as a volunteer?

MJ: Back in middle school, I volunteered for Saint Amant, working in the main facility and also in the day-care there. I really enjoyed it. Once I got into high school, I volunteered in a veterinary clinic. I thought I wanted to be a vet for a while - that experience taught me I didn’t! When I went to university, I heard about CanU and have been volunteering with them since.

WF: What does your volunteer life look like today?

MJ: I’ve been mostly a mentor volunteer for the last three years. One activity is bus mentoring, when we get a school bus to pick up the kids at the schools and take attendance and make sure they’re behaving. I’ve done online tutoring as well, teaching math and some other subjects, which was a fun experience. Volunteering at CanU is the thing I look forward to most each week. I love it so much, it just gives me joy!

WF: Has volunteering given you something that you weren’t expecting?

MJ: With CanU, I’ve learned so much about community, and it solidified the fact that I want to work with kids in some way. Like 100%, that’s what my future looks like. I’m currently heading towards a goal of being an

educator, and I came to that realization in CanU, it solidified that fact for me.

WF: Special volunteer moments?

MJ: CanU has given me the opportunity to do speeches through the Stories of Strength event. I got to talk about my Indigenous ancestry, which is something that I wasn’t proud of at the time. They were super welcoming, super supportive, and it was a big moment for me because I’m not great at public speaking. I’ve gotten better at it over the years, but I’m still not great, so this pushed me towards being a better speaker and a better listener, too, honestly. Through that public speaking experience, I was also invited to help with something called Stand and Deliver. It is this program where we help a bunch of CanU kids work on their public speaking skills, and we’d pick some of the kids from that program to speak at the CanU Gala, which I got to attend as well. It was a lovely experience seeing the kids grow.

WF: What about for other volunteers? What would you what would you tell them?

MJ: Keep doing it. Explore different volunteer opportunities too. Don’t just stick to the same thing. Try different things out. See what works for you and just keep it up. It’s awesome.



MV — NAMAO

After Five Decades of Research,
Old Ship Gets New Lease on Life

By Kevin Rollason



*Photos courtesy
of Lake Winnipeg
Research
Consortium.*



The MV Namao has long served as the backbone of the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium’s (LWRC) decades-long effort to monitor the health of one of the world’s largest freshwater lakes.

Now, thanks to the support of the Winnipeg Foundation, the vessel is well-positioned to continue that mission far into the future. A \$55,000 grant was provided to help fund the installation of new generators on the 51-year-old ship, an essential upgrade that will keep it operating reliably for years to come.

Ryan Johnson, the LWRC’s superintendent of vessel operations, said “The ship’s engines were successfully replaced in 2021, and updating the generators was an important next step as both were the originals from 1975.”

These systems power everything onboard, from lighting and navigation to communications and propulsion, ensuring the MV Namao remains fully equipped to support vital research on Lake Winnipeg.

“The new generators will provide cleaner, more reliable power, ensuring optimal performance of sensitive scientific equipment and supporting high-quality data collection for years to come,” Johnson said.

Julia Patrick, the LWRC’s executive director, said, “We were able to get some funding from the federal government in 2025 to purchase these new generators, but we needed funding to install

them.” That’s when the Foundation came on board with its gift, allowing the LWRC’s team to begin the hard work of taking out the old generators. “The new ones are a lot smaller and a lot lighter while the originals were heavy and large,” Patrick said. “They had to take it out in pieces—it was quite the process.”

“Then they cleaned the entire area, repainted the entire area, then brought in the new generators and installed them. And, once they got installed, then we had to hire electricians to come.” The work began at the end of last year’s research season in October and is just finishing in time for the upcoming one.

“It is very exciting,” Patrick said. “The support of The Winnipeg Foundation made it a reality and a success to install these generators. Now the Namao is ready to go for another 50 years. It has new engines, new generators, and we are constantly looking at ways to continue to make it sustainable and efficient, while ensuring we meet Transport Canada’s requirements every year.”

The ship, built in Riverton in 1975, began its life as a Canadian Coast Guard craft, assisting boats in distress on Lake Winnipeg and putting out and recovering navigational buoys. In the wake of the 1997 Flood of the Century on the Red River, the LWRC was founded in 1998 to conduct research on the effect of that flood on Lake Winnipeg. At about the same time, the federal government was looking at disposing of the ship after privatizing its Aids to Navigation program.



The LWRC, spearheaded by the late Dr. Allan Kristofferson, a former Freshwater Institute fisheries biologist, made an agreement with the Coast Guard to operate the Namao for science research.

A trial survey was carried out in the summer of 1999 and, after being found to be beneficial, a further agreement was made for the Coast Guard to operate the Namao again in 2001, for three more annual surveys, until 2005 when the LWRC took ownership of the vessel. Since then, every spring, summer, and fall, the Namao has carried a nine-member crew and up to seven researchers across the lake for three-week expeditions.

Today, more than 30 agencies, including government, university departments, municipalities, businesses, and other organizations are members of the LWRC. A few include Manitoba Hydro, the City of Winnipeg, Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, Manitoba Environment and Climate Change, Red River Basin Commission, and Norway House Cree Nation. Patrick said this collaborative

approach has produced an extensive body of data. “Now they look at trends and see how the lake has changed and potential areas of concern,” she said. “One year of research doesn’t tell a whole lot, where 20 years is starting to show different things and allow our partners to be able to use that research to help support lake and watershed management decision making.”

Riley Versluis, the LWRC’s science field coordinator, said the organization plays an important and unique role in “bridging a long-standing gap between the scientific community, policy-makers and the public.”

Versluis said the continuing research includes the monitoring of algal blooms and water quality, and the tracking of aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels, rainbow smelt, and spiny water flea.

“Researchers have also examined microplastics in the lake, while a new project we are developing is looking at atmospheric deposition, a fancy term for looking at how particles in the air enter the Lake Winnipeg ecosystem” he said.



Versluis, who is from rural Manitoba, started on the ship as a master’s student at the University of Winnipeg. He said what attracted him to take on his master’s project with the Consortium was to help raise awareness of the work the LWRC does by making the science more accessible to the general public. “You don’t always realize how much specialized knowledge you’ve gained,” he said.

As public engagement and science education coordinator, it’s Lauren Beauchamp’s job to communicate the science conducted by the LWRC to the general public in a meaningful way. “Our education programs aim to reach youth of all ages,” Beauchamp said. These include its flagship Lake Ecology Field Program which offers half-day excursions in Lake Winnipeg’s south basin to students from Grades 8 to 12 and in university. Students are able to get hands-on experience sampling and analyzing the lake’s ecosystem with research-grade sampling equipment.

“We also offer various summer day camps where children take part in lake science with the same scientific equipment used on the Namao or go on the ship itself while it is in harbour,” Beauchamp said. “We are really trying to get more awareness out there about what’s going on, what we’re doing and where to find information. We want to give more information to the public which is easier to digest.”

Versluis said he is glad the LWRC has the Namao because studying a lake the size of Lake Winnipeg is not only challenging but could be dangerous without a vessel of its size. “The MV Namao provides a critical platform that allows whole-ecosystem studies to be conducted safely, efficiently and cost-effectively,” he said.



HELP ALONG THE WAY

New Journey Housing Provides Support to Newcomers

By Michel Durand-Wood

Stepping out of the elevator, I can already tell I'm about to experience something very special. I'm in a nondescript hallway on a frigid February afternoon, but a single brightly coloured sign stands out from the various shades of beige, a beacon calling me towards the door to the offices of New Journey Housing.

Inside, I'm immediately immersed in the sounds of laughter and conversation. Three men are sitting in the nonprofit's reception area, likely waiting their turns to meet with one of the housing and benefits advisors. They speak to each other with a shared bond as friends or family members would, but the number of empty chairs between them hints that they may have just met. At the very least, they didn't arrive here together.

"Welcome! What can I help you with today?"

That's Oksana Slobodianiuk, the friendly face at the reception desk. Her greeting is warm and genuine, like she deliberately chose the word

'help'. It's clear she loves her work here, and it's not hard to imagine her running this place one day.

Today, I'm here to meet with Codi Guenther, New Journey Housing's Executive Director, to learn about the organization and the impact of a \$15,000 Community Grant received from Winnipeg Foundation to review their Affordable Homeownership Program. Jumping right in, she speaks with boundless energy and passion about all the work that happens here.

And that list is long. New Journey's main focus is providing housing supports for newcomers to Canada to rent or purchase housing, but they also provide money management training, income tax filing help, and guidance on accessing various benefit programs. And while their primary clients are newcomers to Canada, they also support sponsors, landlords and anyone involved in newcomer housing.

In particular, their Affordable Homeownership Program has helped 42

families buy their first home by providing up to 10% of the purchase price, to a maximum of \$27,500, towards the down payment and closing costs. But it's as much an educational program as it is a financial aid program.

As one of the Housing Advisors, Azarias Butariho, shares with me,

"When newcomers to Canada come here, they don't know the system here, for example, how to rent, how to buy houses. Back home is easy, but here, when they don't know the system, sometimes they can have problems, and sometimes they can make mistakes."

That's why the program starts with a series of workshops. Participants learn about the advantages and disadvantages of buying versus renting. They learn money management skills, as well as the ins and outs of property taxes and insurance. And they learn the details

of the house-hunting process, the purchase transaction, and mortgage borrowing.

They must still meet certain income thresholds, have some of their own funds set aside, and qualify for pre-approval with a mortgage lender before they can begin looking for their new home. But what the program does is help to accelerate the process for these families, which is extremely beneficial as some are making the leap from subsidized housing into their very own place.

More broadly, in a typical month, New Journey helps 50 to 60 new households with various supports, a number that spiked to nearly 200 per month during the Ukraine response in 2022, pushing them to hire extra staff who could speak Ukrainian. They now have nine staff who speak fifteen languages between them. Azarias alone speaks six: French, English, Swahili, Russian, Kinyarwanda, and Kirundi, a skill he says helps create connections with people who come for supports.



Codi Guenther

For some, that support is as simple as one-time help filing a change of address with a government agency. For others, like refugee claimants, the staff is involved within days of their arrival in the country, to help them transition out of shelters or hotels into rental accommodations, refer them to employment agencies and get set up with any benefits they're entitled to. In most cases, it's only a few months before they're working, renting and contributing to their community.

Although the government funding for their Affordable Homeownership Program ran out two years ago, New Journey is using the grant from The Winnipeg Foundation to evaluate the program's effectiveness, by conducting interviews and surveys with past program participants, partner agencies, as well as some of the many people who

find themselves on a waiting list for a potential future revival of the program.

Once finalized, the report generated will help their advocacy efforts with Manitoba Housing to try to get the program renewed. The need is definitely there: the waiting list already has nearly as many families on it as were helped in the first round. They're also hoping to uncover ways to improve the program.

But just as importantly, Codi thinks it will do amazing things for the New Journey team, to help them recognize the importance of their work for these families.

“To take the time to listen to how your clients were impacted... to a certain extent, no news is good news. But sometimes you don't hear the good news.”

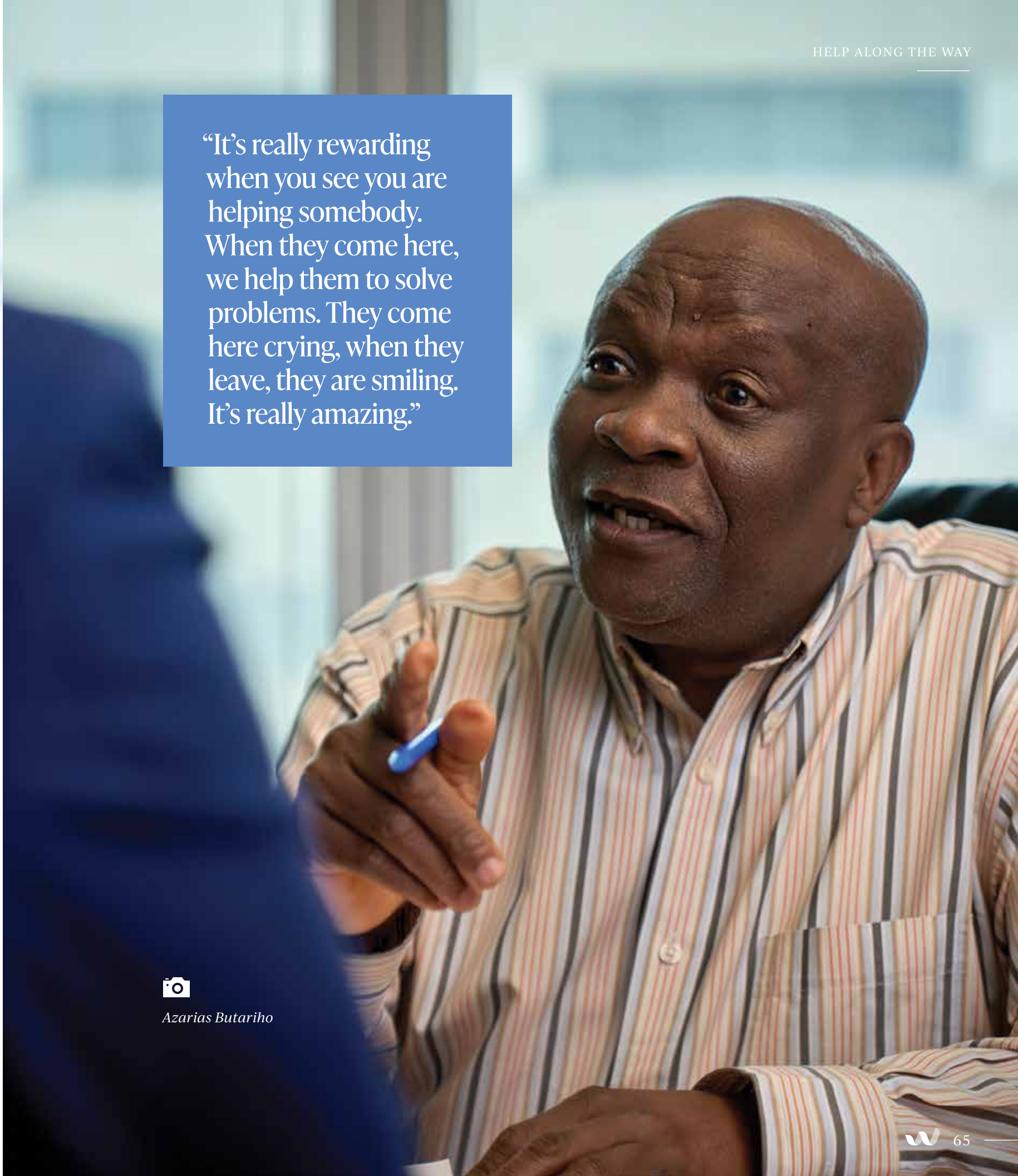
Not that the staff here seem to need the external validation. Codi has been with the organization since its inception, starting as receptionist in 2009, before progressing to Housing Advisor, and then Executive Director. Marnermoo Galloway-White, a Housing Advisor, also started as receptionist fifteen years ago. And Ireen Baylon is an Access to Benefits Advisor today, but ten years ago, she worked as the—you guessed it—receptionist. Seems my impression of Oksana might not have been that far-fetched. But it doesn't end there: Habtemicael Beraki recently celebrated ten years with the organization, and Tarek Gomaa marked nine. You don't get that kind of longevity in an organization without a deep love for the work you do.

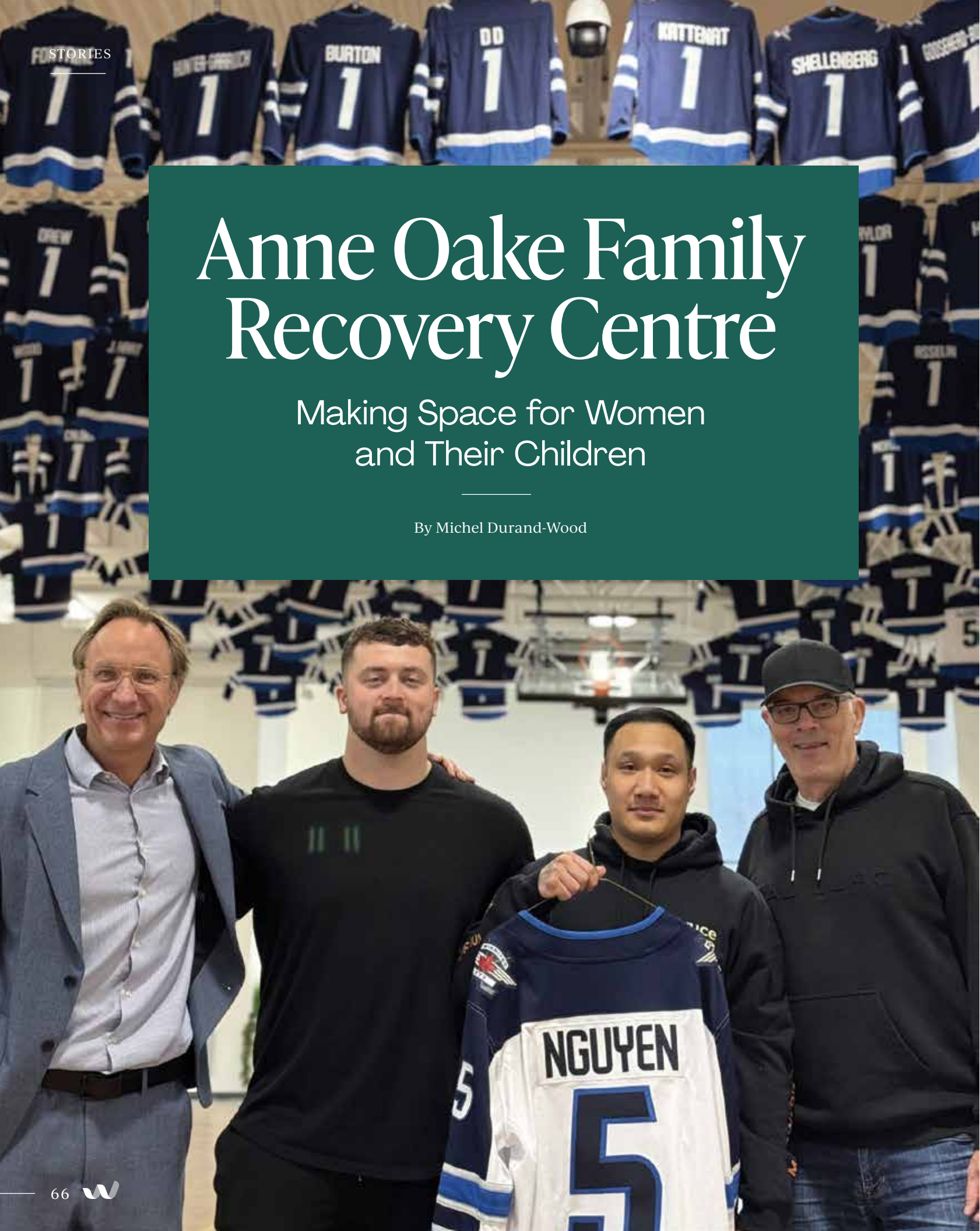
As for Azarias, he's been here fifteen years, and says he's going to continue until he retires.



Azarias Butariho

“It's really rewarding when you see you are helping somebody. When they come here, we help them to solve problems. They come here crying, when they leave, they are smiling. It's really amazing.”





Anne Oake Family Recovery Centre

Making Space for Women
and Their Children

By Michel Durand-Wood

“There’s a graduation here tonight.”

I’m with Scott Oake inside the family room at the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre, a comfortable common area furnished with plush sofas, tables and chairs, and windows with a view to Sturgeon Creek Park. Scott is President and co-founder of the Bruce and Anne Oake Memorial Foundation, the charitable organization that owns and operates the Recovery Centre, and he speaks with the warmth and pride of a father, like he’s talking about his own kids. “Graduations are special. I think there are twelve graduating tonight. They’re actually called Ceremonies of Gratitude because there’s a lot of gratitude expressed on those nights.”

What makes these nights so special is that the ceremonies are as much for the friends and families of the men completing the 16-week in-residence addictions treatment program, as they are for the men themselves. The impacts that addictions have on the family of those battling addiction is well-documented, so recovery is necessarily also about them. That they’re “getting their guy back in good health and good repair,” as Scott puts it, means that family and friends are also entitled to celebrate.

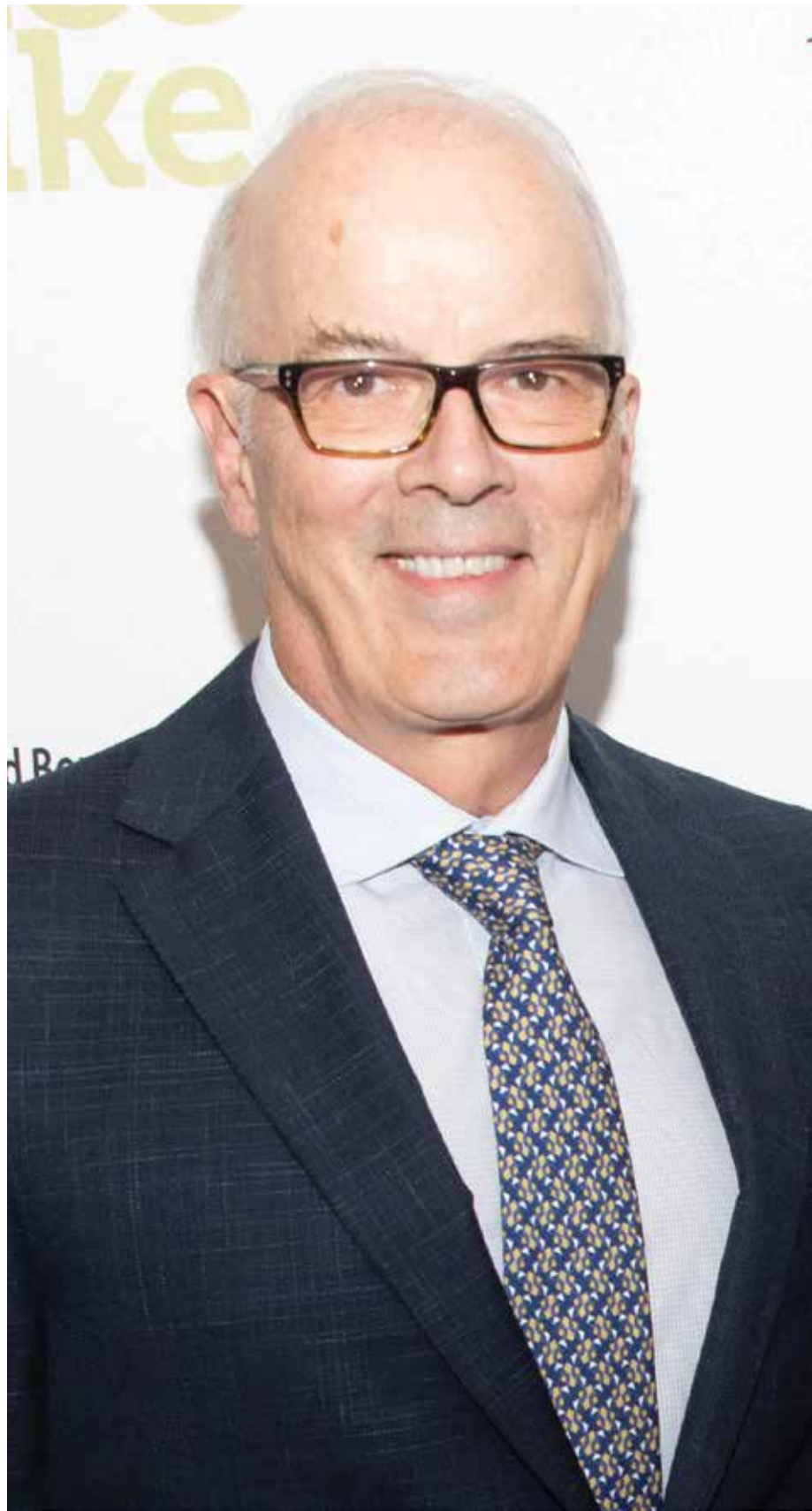
Scott and his late wife Anne’s first-born son, Bruce, battled addiction for a number of years, which eventually claimed his life in 2011. Bruce had had his most successful year in treatment while staying at Simon House, a nonprofit recovery centre in Calgary, and so, to honour their son’s memory, the Oakes wanted to bring that same concept of long-term treatment at no cost to their hometown of Winnipeg.

From the beginning, the guiding principles at the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre have always been two-fold. The first is the continuum of care, because connection is key in recovery. Success comes from having built relationships and community that continue well beyond the initial stay at the Centre. That’s why when someone graduates, they have a counsellor for life, and alumni are encouraged to come back as often as possible, even to drop in for lunch, or to attend other Ceremonies of Gratitude. And the second is access: no one is turned away because they can’t afford to pay.



From left to right: Greg Kylo, Duncan McGovern, Phung Nguyen, and Scott Oake celebrate a 5-year milestone at Bruce Oake Recovery Centre.

Photos courtesy of Bruce Oake Recovery Centre



And it's worked. Since the opening of the 43,000 sq ft Bruce Oake Recovery Centre in 2021, over 600 men have graduated in a Ceremony of Gratitude, returning "in good health and good repair" to their friends, families, jobs, and society in general.

It's hard to overstate how much addictions affects each and every one of us. As Scott relates, "It may not be in your house, but it's probably somewhere in the family tree, and if it's not, it's definitely in your wallet." He quotes a 2008 homelessness study from Calgary, which estimated that for every person battling addictions that could stay sober for a year, taxpayers would save \$138,000 in direct costs. With inflation, "That figure is probably now \$200,000."

In the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre's gymnasium, there are 180 Jets sweaters hanging, each of them standing for one year of sobriety. "In many cases, those guys have 2-, 3-, 4- and we now have three 5-year sweaters hanging up there," says Scott. "We can make the claim that Bruce Oake has saved the taxpayer, in the five years it's been open, as much as \$30 million."

But beyond all that value are the values. Scott speaks highly of the staff here, and in particular Greg Kylo, the Executive Director. He says they have created a culture of kindness, of love, and most of all, of hope.

And all that success has served as inspiration to build a second facility. "Our pledge was always that when Bruce Oake was up and running, we would turn our attention to women who need recovery just as much as men, and more in some cases, because they're often the heartbeat of the family, principal caregivers. And that will be the Anne Oake Family Recovery Centre."

One of the biggest barriers for women is the fear of losing their children if they seek addiction treatment. That makes them reluctant to ask for help, because "no one wants to be chasing their kids through the system the rest of their lives."

To address that, the Anne Oake Family Recovery Centre will be the first recovery centre of its kind in North America to enable women to have their children with them as they get healthy again. Such a family-centered approach requires more beds, and more services—like a day-care—than you would find in other facilities.

And the same guiding principles will apply at Anne Oake Family Recovery Centre as with the men's centre, which means ensuring there are no financial barriers to access whatsoever. Scott tells me that full cost-recovery at the men's centre is approximately \$270 per day, but that very few are paying that. The rest is made up through different contracts, gifts, and grants.

"We appreciate every dollar we get," Scott tells me. "Someone who gives

us \$50 may have to think long and hard about it... but they believe so dearly in this cause that they're willing to make that donation. But you can't establish a facility like the Anne Oake Family Recovery Centre without major gifts."

One of those major gifts was a \$500,000 Major Capital Grant from the Winnipeg Foundation this year, to help build the 65,000 sq ft women's facility.

"The Winnipeg Foundation support was key in starting up Bruce Oake and has been consistent, and the grants to help get the Anne Oake Family Recovery Centre are critically important," explains Scott. "Without them, and many others of their kind, we wouldn't even be talking about construction starting at the end of May."

Even though they haven't yet reached their fundraising goal, Scott says that starting construction without having all the money in place is something they did with Bruce Oake, too: "We can't wait. For every day the Anne Oake Family Recovery Centre is not open, women are dying and families are being torn apart. And that's just the sad truth."

He adds, "The community is responding from the heart, the same way they did for Bruce Oake."





AREAS OF IMPACT

Focus on Seniors' Well-being

Programs that support seniors' well-being are essential to building healthy, connected communities where older adults can age with dignity. From reducing isolation to improving physical and mental health, these initiatives create opportunities for seniors to stay active and engaged. The following programs, funded by Winnipeg Foundation in 2025, strengthen independence, foster belonging, and ensure seniors remain valued members of our community.

Aboriginal Seniors Resource Centre

Indigenous Seniors Resource Centre Project

The Aboriginal Seniors Resource Centre provides a welcoming space grounded in respect, culture, and community. Through the Indigenous Seniors Resource Centre Project, seniors can access food, essential supplies, and a range of activities and workshops. The centre offers more than services; it is also a place where Indigenous seniors gather, share stories, and pass on traditions to younger generations. This work strengthens cultural connection and reduces isolation, helping seniors feel valued and supported.

God's Family Church

Healthy Aging: A Black Immigrant Seniors' Program

God's Family Church is creating space for Black African immigrant seniors to feel supported and connected. Healthy Aging: A Black Immigrant Seniors' Program brings participants together through workshops, peer activities, and gatherings rooted in cultural understanding, helping seniors build relationships and strengthen their sense of identity and belonging. The program supports holistic well-being while helping participants engage in community life..

Meals on Wheels of Winnipeg

Program: Expanding Meal Service

Meals on Wheels of Winnipeg ensures seniors who are unable to shop or cook for themselves receive nutritious daily meals, along with a friendly check-in that can make all the difference. Through its expanded meal service program, the organization is growing its reach to serve more people currently on a waiting list. This work supports seniors in maintaining independence, staying in familiar surroundings, and feeling connected to their community. Reliable access to food is essential, but so is the reassurance that someone cares.

Charleswood Senior Centre

Strength in Motion

The Charleswood Senior Centre offers programs that help older adults stay active and connected. The Centre's Strength in Motion supports seniors living with chronic conditions by combining guided exercise with education and peer support. Participants build strength, improve mobility, and gain confidence in managing their health. Just as importantly, they form connections with others facing similar challenges. The program promotes independence, well-being, and a stronger sense of community.

Gwen Sectar Creative Living Centre

Program: Peer Connections for Isolated Seniors

The Gwen Sectar Creative Living Centre creates opportunities for older adults to stay active, engaged, and connected. The Peer Connections for Isolated Seniors program focuses on those living on low incomes and experiencing loneliness. Through shared meals, gentle exercise, creative activities, and meaningful conversation, participants build relationships and regain a sense of belonging. The program supports mental and physical well-being, helping seniors reconnect with others as part of a caring community.

Palliative Manitoba

Volunteer Visiting Services

Palliative Manitoba provides compassionate support to individuals and families at the end of life. Through the Volunteer Visiting Services program, trained volunteers offer companionship, emotional support, and a caring presence for those receiving palliative care. These visits help reduce feelings of loneliness and bring comfort during a deeply vulnerable time. By ensuring no one faces the end of life alone, this work honours dignity and connection when it matters most.

Manitoba Hindu Seniors

Sharing Knowledge and Building Social Harmony Through Culture

By Nolan Bicknell

“Winnipeg is such a multicultural place, and we need to know each other’s cultures, otherwise, there will not be any harmony,” says Shashwati Shome, Board Chair at Manitoba Hindu Seniors (MHS). “Knowing about culture, respecting other cultures, is a very special thing, and our seniors feel that way too.”

When Shashwati Shome joined the volunteer Board at MHS she made it a priority to create and promote cultural education and understanding for all of MHS’s members. In the last two years alone, they’ve hosted multicultural activities with groups from Romania, Nepal, and local Indigenous communities.

“Within India, there are so many different cultures, different practices, different food, different traditions, dances, and languages,” says Shome. “So we want to continue helping members ‘know your India’, but at the same time, bring in some multicultural groups to showcase for our seniors. And they love it, they absolutely love it.”

MHS offers more than programs; it offers a place to gather, reconnect, and feel at home. Regular activities create space for conversation, laughter, and shared experiences, helping to reduce isolation and support emotional well-being. Seniors are building friendships that extend beyond scheduled events and into everyday life.

Food is a constant at MHS. The new kitchen helps facilitate everything from meals to simple tea gatherings for its members. Lunch is provided for full-day programming, snacks and tea are provided for half-day programming. Vegetables are always on the menu, as most of the members are vegetarian.

A kitchen renovation was needed to ensure the space is safe, functional, and welcoming for everyone who uses it. With support from a 2025 Community Grant from Winnipeg Foundation, MHS upgraded the space to continue offering inclusive programming where food, culture, and community come together.



“Before the renovations, the kitchen floor was cracked, the cupboards were falling apart, sinks were dirty, faucets were too short,” says Shome. “Now, the kitchen is very nice and it’s helpful and valuable for the different programs for the children, youth, and seniors. For the community altogether.”



The kitchen is used to prepare meals for community members and host cooking classes. It is also available for outside groups to rent for parties, events, or community gatherings.

MHS also provides opportunities for their members to explore the city, organizing trips to Fort Whyte, Pinawa, The Leaf, and The Mint. Typically, members have to be 55+ to join MHS, but these trips are open to non-members.

“We are on the bus, they are laughing, they are giggling, singing and having a good time,” says Shome. “New members are making friends with our existing members; it’s a lot of fun for them.”

There’s also an intentional push to connect seniors with youth organizations and performers from both traditional Indian and other cultural backgrounds.

“We love involving our younger generations,” says Shome. “They come, they sing, they dance for the seniors. It’s very nice. It keeps [members] young.”

These intergenerational moments help pass along traditions while creating space for new ones to grow. Young people gain a deeper understanding of culture and community, while seniors remain connected, active, and engaged. The goal is to strengthen a sense of continuity across generations.

Membership has grown over the past two years, attributed in part to the social and emotional benefits of gathering in person to share time, space, ideas, language, and meals.

“It’s important for our members, because they’re coming from India, and there are different cultures within it,” says Shome. “Their roots become so important to everybody, and they’re also interested to know about other cultures.”

MHS hosts holiday celebrations, but not specifically faith-based events. All are welcome and encouraged to participate. Shome hopes to expand the experiences and volunteer opportunities for members to give back.

“I’d like to continue with all these seminars and presentations that involve learning and knowledge sharing that will benefit our seniors,” says Shome. “And continue building the bridge between cultures.”



Back to Basics



Leilani Villarba and Kyle Bergen

Food, Connection, and Community at the Chalmers Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation

By Sabrina Carnevale

In Winnipeg’s Elmwood-Chalmers neighbourhood, the Chalmers Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation (CNRC) is addressing some of the community’s most urgent needs by starting with the basics.

Food. Housing. Connection. Dignity. At CNRC, those needs are linked. When one falls short, the others become harder to keep up with.

“We serve the underserved population,” says Leilani Villarba, executive director of CNRC. “We focus on those who are isolated, low income, on the verge of homelessness or just looking for resources.”

How support is offered matters. CNRC keeps it respectful and practical, so people don’t feel like they’re taking a handout.

CNRC was established in 2013, building on the work that started in 2010. It serves the area between Henderson Highway, Munroe Avenue, Raleigh Road and the Red River, working directly with residents and community partners. Early on, the focus was on grants, community support and neighbourhood improvements. But that’s changed over time.



Today, programs are shaped by what residents say they need, and the work builds from there.

“Nothing we do is based on assumptions,” Villarba explains. “It’s based on what the people are saying—what our community, our participants and our members are asking for.”

You can see the shift in the numbers. Since Villarba became executive director in 2019, the team has grown from three full-time staff to more than 20.

Much of that growth is tied to SAGE, the Supporting Access to Good Eating program (SAGE), which now sits at the centre of CNRC’s work.

At its core, SAGE is about food security, but it goes beyond that. SAGE brings together food access, job support, volunteer opportunities and transitional housing in one place. The goal is to help people stabilize their day-to-day lives.

That includes CNRC’s Employment Support Program, which offers one-on-one support with resumes, job searches and skills development—services aimed at helping people find employment.

“We have an employment counsellor who will help prepare your resume, find volunteer opportunities, build skills and actively search for jobs with you,” Villarba says.

You can see that support in stories like Kyle Bergen’s.

He first connected with CNRC during a difficult stretch, after a medical condition made everyday tasks hard to manage. That’s when he reached out.

It started with help for his lawn care and grew from there.

“They were very resourceful,” he says. “They helped me with my lawn, gave me bus tickets when I needed transportation and even helped me fix up my resume.”

That support helped him rebuild a routine. It also helped him find work.

“I honestly believe it helped,” he says of the resume and employment support he received. “I ended up finding work, and they definitely played a part in that.”

CNRC keeps the approach straightforward. If someone doesn’t have food, housing or a sense of safety, it’s hard to move forward.

“If you want to establish a successful foundation for people, you need to feed them, clothe them and shelter them,” Villarba says. “If they don’t have food, if they’re not housed, if they don’t feel safe—none of it works.”

Food access is a major part of the work.

In this neighbourhood, there aren’t many grocery stores nearby. People often have to travel just to pick up the basics, which makes it harder to find affordable, healthy food.

CNRC has responded by creating several food access points. Its Better Access to Groceries program offers



low-cost produce, and its food rescue initiative redistributes more than 6,000 pounds of food that would otherwise go to landfills.

Each week, more than 300 people line up for the food rescue program. There’s no registration or proof of need required. People simply show up and take what they need. It doesn’t operate like a traditional food bank or store, but rather as a free food giveaway, where taking food also means helping reduce waste.

The setup is deliberate. It removes some of the barriers people face with traditional food programs and reframes the experience.

“It’s not charity,” Villarba says. “They’re helping us save the planet.”

That shift in language and perspective is intentional. It changes how people feel when they walk in.

That sense of accessibility and dignity stood out to Bergen right away.

“Everyone there is very nice,” he says. “It’s such a friendly, welcoming atmosphere.”

CNRC is also planning a low-cost food store on Ottawa Street, with support from The Winnipeg Foundation. It will offer food people can afford, including items that are still safe to eat but close to their expiry date.

Partners like Community Helpers Unite, Brandon Food Rescue and Climate Change Connection will supply food that would otherwise go to waste.

Food is one piece, employment is another, and housing is the third.

CNRC is working to develop transitional housing for people who don’t qualify for shelters but are at risk of losing their homes. It’s meant to give people some stability during periods of change, whether that’s job loss, illness or other setbacks.

“People can go from being stable to having nothing in a very short period of time,” Villarba says. “And when that happens, there’s often nowhere for them to go.”

That gap is where CNRC focuses its efforts.

You can see the impact in how people stay connected. Someone might first come for a meal, then start volunteering and later look for help finding work. Over time, they shift from needing support to giving it.

“When people keep coming back, not because they need help, but because they want to give back, that’s when we know we’re making a difference,” Villarba says.

That sense of community is at the heart of CNRC’s work.

What began as a neighbourhood renewal organization has become a place where people can access food, find support, build skills and reconnect with others.

It starts with the basics, and it builds from there.



Life's Journey Inc.



Debbie Cielen is a Nookomis, an Elder, director, and senior manager at Life's Journey Inc. Of the clans of the turtle and the polar bear, her spirit name means Good Talking Turtle. She has been providing frontline cultural services for the participants of Life's Journey Inc. for 10 years.

"As the grandmother, the role that I play is creating sacred space for our folks at Life's Journey and staff, sharing cultural ceremonies and practices with all nations of people, especially for participants. Because many of them have been in care all their lives and may not have had an opportunity. In our ways of being, the most important thing is that we are spirit first," she explains.

Life's Journey Inc. is a non-profit social services agency operating in Winnipeg, Brandon, and Steinbach, Manitoba. The organization was founded in 2005 as an outreach service provider for adults and youth who are affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), a neurodevelopmental condition resulting from prenatal alcohol exposure, that causes physical, behavioural, and cognitive challenges, such as learning disabilities, memory issues and impulse control difficulties. The agency has since expanded to support a variety of neurodiverse participants, their families, and community.

Life's Journey Inc. takes a holistic and individualized approach to supporting participants that includes housing supports, community supports, wellness programming, clinical services, and cultural care. For neurodiverse participants who

have aged out of Child and Family Services care, finding a home can be complicated. Life's Journey Inc. supports individuals in finding the right living situation, focusing on safe, affordable housing with 24/7 onsite supports and outreach. Examples include shift-staffed residences, home share (a residential arrangement matching individuals needing support with providers who offer a private room and assistance within a family-like setting), cluster housing, or supported independent living.

Community support extends beyond housing to provide participants with case management for transitional planning, outreach for integrating into the community and advocacy for participants navigating community systems. In addition, wellness programming provides participants with life skills training such as cooking, cleaning and medication management and day programming promotes daily structure and enhances quality of life and self-expression through recreation, art and other creative endeavors.

Life's Journey Inc.'s methodology is based on a "two-eyed seeing approach," a principle that encourages using both Western clinical perspectives, such as psychology, psychiatry, and addictions support, alongside traditional Indigenous practices informed by the teachings of the medicine wheel. Each direction on the medicine wheel represents aspects of Indigenous spiritual care, including spiritual identity, emotional connection, physical belonging, and intellectual empowerment. This approach is illustrated in their logo, which depicts stepping stones in the colours of the medicine wheel, and in the Ojibway translation of their name, Miikana Pima-tiziwin, the path of the good life.

Cielen was called to this work after many years of sun dance and ceremony, fasting and learning from Elders and teachers who have come before her. She also supported residential school Survivors for over a decade through the Settlement Agreement Act, assisting in hearings and Truth and Reconciliation Commission events. Cielen attended over 500 hearings where she heard first-hand from Survivors about the atrocities they had lived through as children. She says that experience, coupled with a sun dance vision, showed her the path to her life's work.

"I heard the worst things in my life that would happen to children, and that taught me so much about what is needed, and also taught me all the secrets my family never told me about, and I could finally put them together," Cielen says. "I carry the colours of all nations, and I'm here because I had a sun dance vision of how our program would be given to the people. What was shown is this medicine wheel, and this is our medicine that we bring to our daily activities. And it marries up with our (Life's Journey) values too, which is a miracle."

Cielen explains that what sets Life's Journeys Inc. apart from other service providers is that it is a signatory of the Winnipeg Indigenous Accord, which informs its direction and the training they offer their staff. Life's Journeys Inc. believes that cultural care is an absolute right and that a comprehensive approach to health must include traditional Indigenous healing as a significant component of clinical services. With support from Winnipeg Foundation, Cielen is currently mentoring a participant who has become a peer support worker in delivering cultural supports, such as introducing others to Indigenous teachings, ways of being, and healing practices, and assisting with ceremonies.



Debbie Cielen is a Nookomis, an Elder, director, and senior manager at Life's Journey Inc.



Participants feel comfortable approaching a peer to ask questions, explains Cielen, adding that the peer support worker is an individual who has worked diligently to develop their identity and gifts. She describes the peer support worker as a medicine person, someone who has a gentle spirit and exudes love, making them approachable and easy to talk to. Cielen believes that the individual is living out their life purpose by supporting their peers, guiding and connecting them with tradition.



Peer support fits seamlessly into Life's Journey Inc.'s collaborative approach. Their mission to foster inclusionary spaces to support a balanced life through a blend of responsive services is built on mentoring relationships. By offering a variety of services and environmental adaptations, Life's Journey Inc. addresses a range of needs, helping participants access all the supports for their well-being through a single agency rather than visiting multiple service providers. The holistic approach helps the staff truly understand a participant's needs and the most suitable types of support to help them live a more independent, fulfilling, and well-rounded life. Participants are empowered to develop practical skills for daily life, build healthy relationships and flourish creatively and spiritually.

Additionally, Cielen and other team members at Life's Journey Inc. are mentoring the new peer support

worker in organizational processes and leadership. Eventually, Cielen would like to see the peer support worker leading ceremonies and running sweat lodges. Part of Cielen's long-range vision for the agency is to offer more land-based teachings in traditional circle structures, such as a grandmother's lodge, where participants and the community at large can gather to practice sun dances and full moon ceremonies.

"Everyone has medicine—even an agency has medicine—to bring to the people... I feel like we're a role model as an agency, because this is a place that really respects people... Our support services have kept participants safe. We're very grateful for the financial support, because we've been able to empower folks to have their dignity and respect back, because folks are understanding the input and complexities of history and how it impacts people today."



GORD DOWNIE & CHANIE WEJACK FUND

Legacy Schools
Program Teaches
Cultural Understanding

By Kevin Rollason

Running away from a residential school, hundreds of kilometres from his family, all 12-year-old Chanie Wenjack wanted to do was go home.

Chanie never did finish his journey—he died of exposure and starvation far short of his goal—but now Winnipeg children and youth, along with their teachers, are joining him on a path of reconciliation both inside and outside the classroom supported by Winnipeg Foundation.

The Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF) is inspired by both Chanie's story, and a call by Downie, before his death in 2017, for everyone in Canada to improve Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations. Downie was the lead singer and songwriter for the iconic Canadian rock band The Tragically Hip.

The DWF, through its Legacy Schools Program, is helping teach cultural understanding to children from

day care to high school in order to bring reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Currently, the Legacy Schools Program, in its ninth year of operation, has about 300 people in Winnipeg, who the DWF calls educators, inside 209 schools teaching 7,425 students. Across the country, the program reaches about 250,000 students with more than 10,000 educators in 7,500 schools. Besides schools, it also includes Girl Guides, Scouts and other organizations supporting youth and education.

The program provides educators with a free kit containing tools and resources they can use to incorporate the teaching of Indigenous culture, emphasizing its richness and strength, into all subject areas. The kits include age and grade-appropriate lessons, activity guides and online learning. It also includes a copy of *Secret Path*, a graphic novel detailing Chanie's story.



Michelle Gougeon is one of the Winnipeg educators. A Grade 7 teacher at Collège Churchill High School, in Winnipeg School Division, she has been part of the DWF program for about five years. “As a social studies teacher, I really do try to incorporate in a lot of Indigenous perspective,” Gougeon said. “You don’t just do it once a week. I try to be seamless in my Indigenous inclusion. My students have come to learn there is just a natural expectation and that it is a natural part of my day-to-day teaching.”

Gougeon said the program, which is updated for free annually, offers help for teachers who may be hesitant and worried about teaching the subject of reconciliation. “It’s not that I go and look for some Indigenous stuff that I can throw in,” she said. “It’s rather than I can look for Indigenous and

then consider how my curriculum can bend around it. It is especially good for teachers who maybe feel intimidated by this work or are not feeling as natural or comfortable with this work.”

Chanie was only nine when he was sent to a residential school in Kenora, more than 600 kilometres away from his family. Three years later, Chanie and nine other students ran away with all but him found within 24 hours. Chanie was found a week later. His death sparked the country’s first inquest into the treatment of Indigenous children at residential schools. Downie learned about Chanie’s story and in the last year of his life worked with the Wenjack family to produce an album, film, and graphic novel about him.

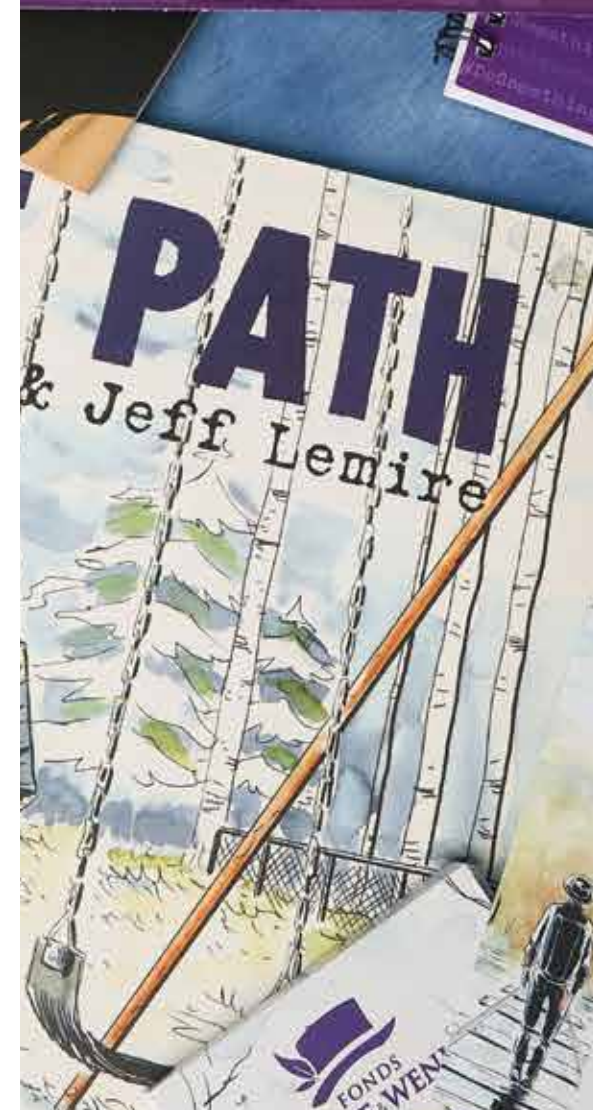
QUICK START GUIDE USING THE SECRET PATH

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and deliberate.

Secret Path is the last thing I do, I

— Gord Downie



Gougeon said her students have gone outside the classroom to do a community walk in honour of Chanie. She said they have also tied ribbons on the school’s fence to honour and remember missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people on May 5. They’re not alone.

Students at Gonzaga Middle School created and painted a 40-foot mural along the front of a shipping container in their school yard. Institut collégial Vincent Massey Collegiate students went on a walk in honour of both Chanie and Downie led by the school’s drummer.

Carthia School Grade 5 and 6 students, after learning about Chanie and residential schools, walked to the site of the Assiniboia Residential School on Academy Road in Winnipeg. There they saw a memorial consisting of paving stones carved with the names of more than 1,000 students who went to the school as well as 28 markers with the names of the 83 Indigenous communities they came from.

Sarah Midanik, the DWF’s president and CEO, has been with the organization since the beginning. “In our very earliest days, I remember going to Winnipeg,” she said. “We have a relationship with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation so we’ve had Legacy Schools in Winnipeg from the very beginning.” Midanik said they try to make their programming as accessible as possible to support core curricular learning objectives across all provinces and territories.

“I hate to say ‘choose your own adventure,’” said Midanik, “but we really try and support educators where they’re at, including something to help support them in math and sciences. “We just really want to help educators and support them so that there isn’t a fear, so they aren’t afraid to teach the true history of this country.”

The Foundation has provided \$20,000 in funding from its Community Grant program to the DWF. The organization is hoping it will help it increase participation in its Legacy Schools Program in Winnipeg by 10 per cent. “We’ve been supported by the Winnipeg Foundation from the earliest days,” Midanik said. “We’re so grateful for the support of the Winnipeg Foundation because it enables us to reach more young people so that the next generation of young people in Canada know the truth and have a greater understanding and empathy and, frankly, we’re breaking down systemic racism.”

“We always try and share the message that reconciliation is not easily defined. It’s not linear. It is not like you hit the check boxes and say we did it. It’s a continuous process and a journey of learning.”

Gougeon said she would like to see more schools and more teachers join the Legacy Schools Program. “The residential schools took away a lot of opportunities for Indigenous people,” she said. “I like the idea that now schools can give back.”

Foundation Footnotes

Joe Zuken’s Community Legacy

by Cathy Auld

Notable on an alphabetical list, from A through Z, of people and organizations active in our community is Joseph (Joe) Zuken. Joe was born in Ukraine in 1912, and in the winter of 1914 his family, father, mother, and older brother Bill, made their home in Winnipeg’s North End. Like other new immigrants, the Zuken family built a life for themselves while identifying opportunities to support others. After a workplace accident in a packing plant, Joe’s father lost his job. Joe’s parents then operated a “mom and pop” store, which eventually grew into two stores, where they offered credit to customers but never tried to collect what was owed to them.

Early in his youth, Joe demonstrated keen observational skills, curiosity, and a belief in social good. Though he was only seven years old at the time of the Winnipeg General Strike

in 1919, he heard stories from people gathering and making speeches at Market Square. He was fascinated by the debates, and moved from group to group, listening and learning.

Joe’s experiences in the education system deepened his interest in social activism and addressing equity and disparity. When he was in St. John’s Technical High School, his mother had to borrow money to pay for textbooks and for exams, items not covered by the public school system.

After high school, Zuken did some tutoring work and taught Yiddish literature and history part-time in a Jewish school in the north end of Winnipeg. He aspired to enroll in university but lacked the money to pay tuition fees. His brother helped financially so that one of them could pursue this. Joe graduated in law

from the University of Manitoba in 1936. Lacking funds to pay the entrance fee to be admitted to the Bar Association after graduation, he later established his law practice in 1941.

Joe Zuken’s 42 consecutive years of service to the public good are a reminder of how he lived his values. As an elected school trustee, he championed free textbooks and the creation of universal kindergarten, and wanted the public school system to recognize how social and economic factors impacted students ability to learn and thrive. Zuken advocated for access to primary health care in his constituency, leading to the establishment of Seven Oaks Hospital. When it came to his accomplishments, Zuken would defer to collective efforts that led to positive change, claiming he was active at a strategic time.



Photo courtesy of University of Winnipeg Archives, Western Canada Pictorial Index, Miscellaneous Collection

Zuken led a soft protest when the intersection of Portage and Main was closed to pedestrians in March 1979 as part of a development agreement. Pedestrian access returned in 2025.



Photo courtesy City of Winnipeg, Historical Buildings & Resources Committee.

Joe Zuken Heritage Park Marker

Nominated as a candidate by the Labour Election Committee in 1961, Zuken served as a member of the City of Winnipeg Council until 1986. Zuken recognized the need for cooperation between levels of government on matters of health, housing, social assistance, and urban planning.

In his later years, Zuken was honoured with a City of Winnipeg Service Award, an honorary law degree from the University of Winnipeg, induction as an Officer of the Buffalo Hunt by the Province of Manitoba, and Distinguished Service Award from the University of Manitoba.

It is now 40 years since Joe’s passing. Upon his death in 1986, a group of citizens came together to establish the Joseph Zuken Memorial Association. This group of friends and colleagues wanted to shine a light on Joe’s ded-

icated contributions in community. A public appeal for financial contributions launched the Joseph Zuken Memorial Trust Fund at Winnipeg Foundation.

The Joseph Zuken Citizen Activist Award, created in 1987, recognizes individuals or groups that make contributions to the community and to Winnipeg. Focused areas include education, social justice policy, law, municipal government, the arts, and the Yiddish language.

In keeping with Zuken’s interest in education, the Joe Zuken Scholarship at the University of Winnipeg supports Indigenous students in the Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies.

