

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND NURTURING CHANGE

THE LINK: YOUTH AND FAMILY SUPPORTS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 APRIL 1, 2022, TO MARCH 31, 2023





Land Acknowledgement: The Link: Youth and Family Supports is honoured to be situated on Indigenous lands where we work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous families, staff and communities. Our offices and homes are located on Ininew, Anishinaabe, Dene, Oji-Cree and Dakota land and in the homeland of the Métis Nation. Our head office is located on Treaty 1 territory and our homes and sub-offices are located throughout Treaty 2 and Treaty 5 territories. We acknowledge the harms that our work, rooted in colonial systems, has caused and we are dedicated to correcting our mistakes by listening, learning from and cooperating with Indigenous communities and families in a spirit of truth, respect, collaboration and reconciliation.





Table of Contents

- 5 Message from the Board Chair and Chief Executive Officer
- 6 Board of Directors
- 7 Youth Engagement Survey and Report
- 8 Youth Summits
- 10 Resource Rally
- 11 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada: Calls to Action
- 15 Cultural Values Assessment
- 17 Indigenous Initiatives
- 20 Community Support Services
- 23 New Programs
- 24 Mental Health Supports
- 26 Youth Resource Centres (YRCs) and Emergency Shelters
- 29 Skills4Life Programs
- 31 Coach Program
- 32 The Youth Hub
- 33 Social Enterprises
- 36 Life at The Link
- 39 Donors, Donations and Drives
- 42 Financial Information





The Link supports over 10,000 youth and families each year in Manitoba.

Our dedicated team provides wraparound services and community-based programs to:

- Connect individuals to their culture, identity and community
- Enhance physical, mental and emotional wellness
- Strengthen safe, caring, collaborative and respectful relationships with family, peers and people in the community
- Equip youth with skills for lifelong independence, including job training and school supports

On June 10, 2021, the Board of Directors unanimously passed a motion to rename the organization. The decision to change the name from Macdonald Youth Services (MYS) acknowledges the harms perpetrated by the residential school system and the call to take action toward reconciliation.

We became The Link: Youth and Family Supports on January 12, 2022, and we continue to expand our brand, evolve and to take steps towards reconciliation.



Message from the Board Chair and Chief Executive Officer

This past year we saw a comeback from several years of the world-halting pandemic where many resources were discontinued, families experienced unbearable losses and common feelings of loneliness, isolation and fear were widespread. The pandemic also shone a spotlight on the inequities between community members specifically related to poverty and accessibility to supports.

The Link's team met these challenges by continuing to provide crisis interventions, safe spaces, clinical resources and community services supported housing, employment, food security, recreation and cultural opportunities. We also welcomed a Nurse Practitioner, Ellisha Thunder, to our team. Ellisha's caring and professional approach has ensured many participants received the care they required in a timely manner while in a supportive environment.

Each day, over 350 employees showed up to serve community members and give them the hope that together we were resilient and would not only survive, but thrive. The commitment and dedication resulted in The Link not only maintaining services, but implementing changes to enhance existing resources and developing new programs to better serve families.

In 2022-2023 three new programs were opened to support youth and families:

- Caring Connections started with the support of the Department of Families in September 2022 to prevent child welfare involvement by preserving or reunifying families. It has proven to be an effective resource in supporting sibling groups.
- Semi-independent apartments were developed in response to a need for second stage housing options for youth and young adults graduating from the Transition House program. Semi-independent apartments were open November 2022, at the home on Ottawa St. (formerly Maple) with two apartments providing onsite supervision 24/7 for the tenants. The purpose is to transition the youth/young adults to independent living. In partnerships with agencies, Department of Families, biological families and community partners, The Link was able to adapt to meet the current community needs.

Family Connections was opened March 2023
to support families to have regular visits with
their children. Agencies can book supervised
daily, nightly or weekly visits for families. The
team is trained in supporting parents to have a
meaningful visit with their children by role modeling,
homemaking, play and problem solving.

Overall, The Link has adapted in the last year and in many ways grown stronger. Management and the Board of Directors are committed to supporting employees, delivering impactful services responding to the needs of our community.

We cannot wait to see what 2023-24 has in store for our organization and for the amazing youth and precious families who come through our doors across the province each day.



Kerri Irvin-Ross
Chief Executive Officer

"I am grateful to witness The Link's dedicated employees serving and caring for children and youth daily. The teams delivering the front line services motivate me to work harder so together we can address community needs and offer hope to families across the province. The participants inspire me every day with their resilience, determination and many gifts."



Candace Olson

President of the Board and Chair

"Our employees' dedication to and passion for the work that The Link does within our community is inspiring. The contributions that the staff and volunteers of this organization make daily to ensure that the people we walk with feel supported are remarkable. I'm honoured to play a small role in this organization and excited to see how our team can continue to adapt and work within our community going forward."

Board of Directors

Candace Olson President of the Board and Chair

Ryan Kwan Vice-President

Sarah Corley Secretary and Treasurer Shane Storie
Past President

Alec MacIsaac

Director

Cathy Cook
Director

(Term concluded January 18, 2023) Jim Krovats Director

Kaeden Merasty

Director

Mandeep Rai Director Sudhir Sandhu

Director

Thai Lam

Director

TRC Call to Action - 4

We call upon the federal government to enact Aboriginal child-welfare legislation that establishes national standards for Aboriginal child apprehension and custody cases and includes principles that:

- i. Affirm the right of Aboriginal governments to establish and maintain their own child-welfare agencies.
- ii. Require all child-welfare agencies and courts to take the residential school legacy into account in their decision making.
- iii. Establish, as an important priority, a requirement that placements of Aboriginal children into temporary and permanent care be culturally appropriate.

The Link's Commitment and Work

The Link is committed to being a meaningful ally to Indigenous leaders, agencies and communities that will lead to fundemental changes to child welfare and better supports for families.

Youth Engagement Survey and Report

The Link carries out a Youth Engagement Survey, which is voluntary for youth and enables caregivers to engage in therapeutic conversations with children and youth between the ages of 5-21 and provides The Link with a variety of opportunities to:

- Demonstrate strengths-based and recoveryoriented practice by valuing youth feedback regarding the care they receive.
- Assist with youth involvement in their own care plan and goal setting.

- Ensure concerns are addressed and positive changes are celebrated.
- Build and maintain the positive engagement of youth with family and community.
- Improve youth experiences and the effectiveness of our services.
- · Honour the rights of the youth people we serve.

This tool ensures that youth receive regular opportunities to provide feedback on the quality of care they are receiving.

2023 Youth Engagement Survey Report Survey results include voluntary responses from youth in The Link's Healing Homes, Heart to Home Foster Program, Independent Living with Supports, Surveys Completed Skills4Life, Youth HUB and Youth Resource Centre programs between April 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023. Always Information below reflects feedback from youth across Sometimes surveys, which are conducted quarterly, annually or Prefer not to answer semi-annually, depending on program. No 73% Feel safe in the home Feel they have at least 1 safe adult Feel like my caregivers where I live they feel comfortable talking to care about me Feel The Link Staff treat Feel they have a voice in their Believe they can reach their them with respect own planning and goal setting goals for the future Practice or explore spiritual & Are happy with how much contact Are happy with the support cultural traditions & customs that they have with 1 or more of the they have at The Link are important to them important people in their life

Youth Summits

The Minister of Families' Youth Leadership Council hosted two Youth Summits – one in Thompson on October 17 and 18, and the other in Winnipeg on December 13 and 14, 2022, to discuss important issues related to building healthy, modern, youth-friendly communities in our province. Participants include 60 youth ages 15-29, and representatives from youth-serving organizations.

Youth came together to share their ideas and experiences and then bring together their vision with recommendations for the Province of Manitoba. This information will help to inform government leadership on how to adapt programs and services for future generations to create healthy communities throughout Manitoba.

Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister for Families, provided opening remarks on December 13, 2022, and Honourable Wayne Ewasko, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, was also in attendance.

Cheryce Onook-Pilling, Acting Manager, Clinical Services & Indigenous Initiatives, of our northern team, led the groups through the summits and created a safe and welcoming space at each event where youth felt comfortable sharing their experiences and thoughts.



Thompson Youth Summit - Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister for Families, Kerri Irvin-Ross, CEO of The Link, Billie Jo Thompson, Supervisor of the StreetReach North program and Honourable Wayne Ewasko, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning.



Thompson Youth Summit - Youth participants and Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister for Families.



Winnipeg Youth Summit, Freight House – Elder Billy Schibler and Cheryce Onook-Pilling, Youth Summit Facilitator.



Winnipeg Youth Summit, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre – Honourable Wayne Ewasko, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Cheryce Onook-Pilling, Youth Summit Facilitator and Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister for Families.



About the Youth Leadership Council:

In June 2022, the Manitoba Government announced the creation of the Youth Leadership Council, which is composed of representatives from youth-service organizations, as well as youth ages 15 to 21 who have experience with Manitoba Families programs. The council will be active until 2024 and is co-chaired by Kerri Irvin-Ross, Chief Executive Officer at The Link: Youth and Family Supports.

The Youth Leadership Council reflects the diversity of Manitoba including 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth and engages community experts and youth from across the province to gather their perspectives, insights and advice on current and emerging issues for youth who access services offered by the department including those who:

- are in the care of child and family services agencies,
- live with disabilities,
- live with families that receive Employment and Income Assistance,
- live in Manitoba Housing, and
- have experienced homelessness.

For more information, visit www.gov.mb.ca/fs/youthcouncil

Winnipeg Youth Summit, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre– Breakout group in discussion.

Resource Rally

The Amazing Resource Rally was held in Thompson and hosted by The Link's northern team on Friday, March 31, 2022.

We had a great turnout of staff, youth and service providers from the community. There was also participation from Street Reach, Wuskwatim Healing Home, Life Transition and Indigenous Initiatives, which brought together and connected youth from across all programs.

The rally had carloads of youth travelling all around Thompson to search for youth-related resources. Many of the service providers complimented the youth on their engagement; they were so impressed to see the youth asking questions, taking notes and approaching the organization's teams.





After the rally everyone headed over to the Thompson City Recreation Centre (TRCC) for prizes, food and games. One of the most popular highlights from the gym night at the TRCC was the human version of Hungry, Hungry Hippos!



A BIG CONGRATULATIONS and THANK YOU goes out to Tia, Margaret and Serena, our third year social work students whose amazing efforts and vision created this hugely successful event - you did a wonderful job!



Some of the awesome team helping with the rally - Nick, Tia, Serena and Margaret.

Another big thank you goes out to everyone who helped with the event - it couldn't have happened without you.

There were some fabulous prizes from the generous Thompson business vommunuty, which included a Nintendo Switch with game and case as one of the big door prizes, four TVs for a winning team, blue tooth speakers, and so much more.

Here are some of the places and organizations the youth visited along the way:

- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO)
- University of Manitoba Social Work
- Marymound Futures
- Maps (Men Are Part of the Solution)
- Department of Families
- Manitoba Housing
- · Justice Probations
- Hope North

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada: Calls to Action

Throughout 2022-2023, The Link continued to respond to the harms resulting from Canada's legacy of the Indian Residential School System, colonization, and the ongoing oppression experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Our work started in the spring of 2021 with an organizational development process, originally designed by the Manitoba Harm Reduction Network and Ka Ni Kanichihk, and was designed specifically for non-Indigenous organizations and adapted for The Link.



Honourable Murray Sinclair, Keynote Speaker at The Link's 2022 AGM.

The goal of the process is to increase employee knowledge and understanding of Canada's history of colonization through the Residential School System and the TRC's 94 Calls to Action.

Every department within the organization committed to the 94 Calls to Action to improve operations and support the delivery of more culturally appropriate and safe services for Indigenous youth and families.

We've included some highlights and work we've committed to related to the Calls to Action throughout the report.

If you'd like to learn more:

- Read the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action'
- Watch 'Every Child Matters: Reconciliation through Education' videos



Red Dresses Hang in our spaces to bring awareness to the MMIWG2S.



Orange Ribbons are tied to remind our communities that Every Child Matters.

We call upon provincial and territorial governments, in collaboration with Survivors and their organizations, and other parties to the Settlement Agreement, to commission and install a publicly accessible, highly visible, Residential Schools Monument in each capital city to honour Survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities.

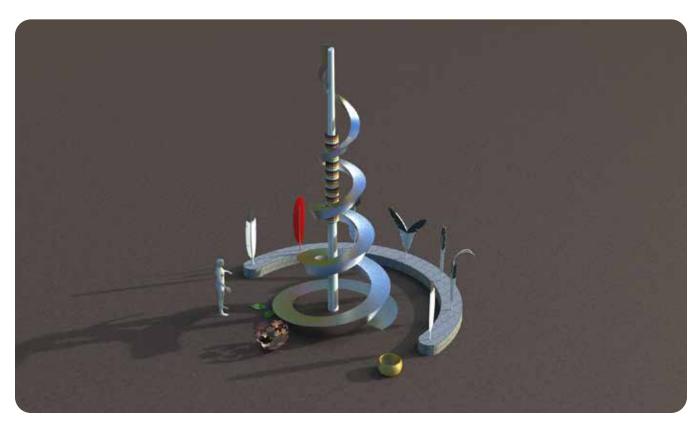
The Link's Commitment and Work

The Link has supported the development of a monument created by the artist Valerie T. Vint.

Financial support was provided by The Link to provide honorariums for contributing artists and were successful in securing funding from the Winnipeg Foundation to develop the model with the manufacturer.

Children's Spiral - the answer to TRC Call to Action #82 by Valerie T. Vint

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendation #82, I have a vision of a monument to honour the children who died, the children who survived and all children affected by the residential school system.



Valerie T. Vint's vision for the Children's Spiral Monument.

We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process.

The Link's Commitment and Work

The Link worked with artists throughout the year to create murals in common spaces and hosted "Paint Nights".





Jason Lucas created an underwater, ocean mural for the Youth Hub in the foyer of 175 Mayfair Avenue.



Uncle Nick Thomas and youth participants painted a mural in Thompson.





Jan Castillo's mural of bees brings colour and joy to the second floor and clinical therapy waiting area at 175 Mayfair Avenue.

We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by:

- Monitoring and assessing neglect investigations.
- ii. Providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.
- iii. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools.
- iv. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing.
- v. Requiring that all child-welfare decision makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers.

The Link's Commitment and Work

Education and training are core values at The Link. The focus is on decolonization and intergenerational traumas related to Indian Residential Schools, Sixties Scoop and racism are the basis of many training sessions and workshops such as: Harm Reduction, My Bundle, and The Turtle Island Project.

We also offer training in Circle of Courage, Therapeutic Crisis Solutions (TCS) and promote access to the University of Alberta's Indigenous Canada training.

Turtle Island Project

The Turtle Island Project (TIP) is an action-oriented exercise designed to transform society's negative perceptions of Indigenous Peoples and engage in reconciliatory action. Participants will be invited to walk in the shoes of Indigenous Peoples on a journey that began 150 years ago, and then share in celebrating the lives of Indigenous Peoples today.

The Link is committed to providing exceptional programs for children, youth and families across the province of Manitoba. We have invested hundreds of hours to train team members so they can provide the best possible services and provide employees with the tools to meet the diverse needs of youth and families across the organization.

We are grateful for the licensing specialist from the Department of Families who attended Healing Home team meetings and YCP 101 onboarding to train dozens of Youth Care Practitioners (YCPs) about licensing requirements, record keeping, writing incident reports and medication administration reports.

The Link also worked with consultants to develop a one-week training – Starting Safely. The goal of the Starting Safely training is to support the onboarding of new YCPs by answering some of the fundamental questions about their responsibilities and improve their confidence when working directly with the youth.







Cultural Values Assessment

In 2022-2023, The Link's Management and the Board of Directors continued to focus on the culture of the organization by seeking information from employees to define the ten values identified in the Cultural Values Assessment (CVA).

In spring, 2019, The Link embarked on a process of Organizational Cultural Transformation using a Cultural Values Assessment (CVA).

We then paused the initiative due to the pandemic, but in the spring of 2021, we were able to get back on track and we conducted a survey and hosted a series of conversation cafés to help us understand our organizational values and what our ideal workplace culture could look like.

These are the 10 Cultural Values employees at The Link want to see in our workplace, based on the survey (Spring 2021) and affirmed by employee feedback (March 2023).

These values, along with The Link's mission to support youth and families in Manitoba, are the foundation of The Link's Cultural Values Action Plan.

- Accountability
- 2. Adaptability
- 3. Communication/Information Sharing
- 4. Teamwork
- 5. Conflict Resolution
- 6. Honesty
- 7. Employee Recognition
- 8. Employee Fulfillment
- 9. Employee Health
- 10. Continuous Improvement

Spring-Summer 2022

- 17 Community Conversation Cafés were hosted for team members of The Link
- · 80 employees shared feedback
- 18 Departments from across organization participated

Fall 2022

- Hosted Town Halls where team members could join in-person or virtually
- We were provided with the final Cultural Values Assessment report which identified:
 - 10 Desired Cultural Values
 - 10 Recommended Focus Areas of Action

Winter 2023

 We made a cyclic-structured Cultural Values (CV) Action Plan, based on these values and recommendations.

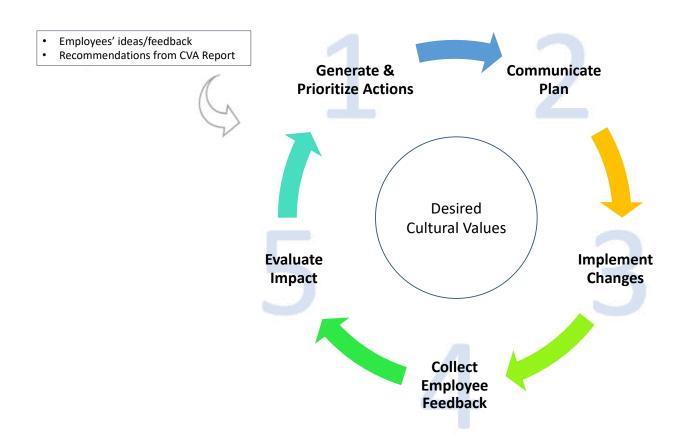
Spring 2023

 The structure and first cycle of the CV Action Plan was communicated, employee feedback on the plan was collected, and the first set of action items were completed. We then identified 10 Recommended Focus Areas for Action to move our culture closer to the values we want to see demonstrated in the workplace. These recommendations were originally shared with staff in November 2022.

- Performance Development The Link would benefit from developing a structured performance development system for employees and supervisors.
- Quality of Services The Link would benefit from focusing more on the quality of services delivered to youth and families.
- Communication & Information Sharing The Link would benefit from sharing more information in more ways.
- 4. Shared Vision All practitioners within The Link should have a shared vision and approach to practice while embracing each individual's unique gifts.
- Honour Indigenous Staff The Link must recognize, honour and respect the lived experiences and valuable contributions of Indigenous staff.

- **6. Harm Reduction –** The Link should operationalize harm reduction within policy and practice.
- Staff Mental Health The Link would benefit from education on vicarious trauma and a plan to support staff mental health.
- 8. **Team Building –** The Link would benefit from implementing annual paid team building days for each program area.
- Training & Onboarding The Link would benefit from more robust, program-specific training and onboarding as well as a centralized training department.
- **10. Management & Leadership Development –** The Link would benefit from leadership training for supervisors who oversee employees.

We also developed a process that will allow us to make incremental changes, hear from employees, evaluate our impact, and adjust course as needed and committed to an ongoing cycle of cultural change action, aligned with 10 Cultural Values, guided by our 10 Recommendations and regularly informed by employee feedback.



We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

The Link's Commitment and Work

Officially acknowledged National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a statutory holiday.

Indigenous Initiatives

The Indigenous Initiatives team, led by Knowledge Keepers, works across the organization connecting youth, families, staff and community members to the skills, knowledge, traditional languages, experiences and land-based practices central to the healing journey for Indigenous families and critical to shaping a child's identity and sense of belonging.

In the 94 Calls to Action, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls for all Indigenous children and youth to receive culturally appropriate, community-grounded placements and support. Although we are a non-Indigenous organization, over 80 per cent of the youth we serve are Indigenous. It is our responsibility to ensure we facilitate culturally appropriate healing practices for those impacted by ongoing colonial trauma. Research and literature demonstrate healing for Indigenous youth must be culturally specific and cultural restorative practice is the foundation for breaking cultural stress for our clients. We acknowledge this is an essential part of their healing journey.

Programming and activities are offered monthly or weekly and some practices are embedded into our daily routines at The Link. The land-based activities being offered in Winnipeg and Thompson promote belonging, mastery and confidence. Our youth and families, staff and community members were all welcome and encouraged to participate in the following:

- Beading and Language
- · Drum and Rattle Making
- · Drumming and Song Teachings
- Educational Supports
- Fire Keeping Fridays
- Fishing
- · Full Moon Ceremonies
- Medicine Picking and Teachings
- · Michif Mondays
- My Bundle
- · Name Ceremonies
- · Ribbon Skirt and Shirt Making
- Spring Break and Summer Programming
- Sun Dance Ceremonies
- · Sweat Lodge Ceremonies
- Tea with our Knowledge Keeper



















My Bundle

My Bundle is a program created for the children and youth in our care who are coming to know and understand their kinship connections, which extend beyond human relationships and encompass relationships with all of creation.

The goal of My Bundle is to remove the barriers to creation and expression to truly give space for mastery and independence where the children and youth participating in the process can be the drivers of their own experiences. By incorporating arts-based and other creative activities, children and youth are given the agency to share and learn about themselves and their relationships in a way that is non-invasive and non-judgmental. This gives them freedom to identify, discover, and share their experiences without mediation from staff or caregivers.

Some members of the Indigenous Initiatives Team.



Norway Rabliauskas



Jocelyn Pambrun



Knowledge Keeper, Jaime Grasby



Cheryce Onook-Pilling



Cheyla Ponace

TRC Call to Action - 66

We call upon the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation, and establish a national network to share information and best practices.

The Link's Commitment and Work

Work in collaboration with elders and knowledge keepers to create resources and programming for youth.

Community Support Services

The Link: Youth and Family Supports offers a range of free services to help stabilize youth and families in times of crisis and improve long-term strength, resilience and well-being. Our goal is to help keep families together, surrounded by an extended community of support.

Heart to Home

The Heart to Home service area provides short or long-term specialized, trauma-informed foster care services for children and youth who require a therapeutic home-based environment to support their needs and develop connections. Heart to Home Foster Parents are selected based on their experience and skills and their commitment to the children in their care and are evaluated ongoing and annually through a therapeutic competencies-based tool.

The foster parents with the support of the Heart to Home team provides safe and loving homes for children and youth where they are wrapped in critical supports and love to help them thrive. There is an important emphasis for the children and youth to stay connected to their families, culture and communities. The foster parents are committed and an important partner in supporting reunification.



Andrew and J.P. at the Annual foster parent summer gathering.

Heart to Home Key Information



98

foster children supported by The Link



28

foster families in the Winnipeg and surrounding area



19

foster families in Thompson and The Pas



64

children had regular and ongoing contact with their family

When possible, the care team works with the child's family and extended family to facilitate reconnection and reunification planning



28

hours for annual training is completed by all Heart to Home Foster Parents and they have access to 24/7 in-home and on-call clinical supports



52

children/youth in the Heart to Home program were involved in some form of community program or restorative cultural healing, either through school, The Link or some other community resources

Healing Homes

The Link's Healing Homes are a network of community-based group homes offering youth ages 10-18 safe spaces, compassion, one-on-one support and specialized therapy to help with emotional, behavioral, social and/or medical needs that require high levels of support, supervision and intervention, ongoing clinical treatment plans and cultural activities.

Our focus continues to be on reviewing and implementing international best practices in child and youth care and strategies to optimize the recruitment and retention of employees within the Healing Homes.

In the fall of 2022, The Link offered an opportunity for Youth Care Practitioners (YCPs) to attend the Child and Youth Care Diploma program at Red River College Polytechnic. RRC Polytech allocated spaces specifically for team members working as full or part time YCPs at The Link.

The Child and Youth Care Program focuses on how to assess situations, intervene and formulate strategies to help children, youth, and their families enhance their quality of life. The program covers the dynamics of human development within a multicultural perspective.

There were seven YCPs enrolled in the program in 2022-2023.







The Link's Child and Youth Care Workers (YCWs) represent almost half our entire workforce. They work in our Healing Homes, resource centres, shelters and programs, caring for youth throughout Manitoba from centres in Thompson, Winnipeg and St. Pierre. Each year in May, Child and Youth Care Workers are celebrated and in 2022, we acknowledged the amazing work of our Youth Care Practitioners (YCPs) and their contributions to strengthening our communities by sending treats and messages all week long to let them know that they are appreciated and making an impact on the lives of many youth!

TRC Call to Action - 5

We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families.

The Link's Commitment and Work

Ensure all Healing Homes team members are facilitating connections for Indigenous youth with their families, home communities and kinship circles.

Always have Indigenous resources available for youth including medicines and ceremonial items.

In 2022-23 The Link operated nine Healing Homes

- Edgewood/Polcyn
- · St. Pierre
- Bannerman

- Willow
- · Aspen
- Kookum's House
- Wuskwatim
- Transition House North
- Transition House South

Mobile Crisis Teams

Mobile Crisis Teams (MCT) support youth and families with safety and mental health concerns, parent/child conflict and behaviour management wherever a crisis is occurring, whether at home, in hospital, at school or elsewhere in the community.

Mobile Crisis Teams at Work

A mobile crisis team consists of two Clinicians who work together to provide services to youth and families in their community. The team assists in stabilizing crises with a focus on working with the youth on site by working collaboratively with the youth and family and provides on-site service to ensure the youth's emotional and physical safety. The Link has four Mobile Crisis Teams working 24/7.

The top four issues presented at the time of the calls are:

- 1. Mental health concerns
- 2. Behavioral difficulties
- 3. Parent/child conflict
- 4. Caregiver's exhaustion

Our crisis workers, clinicians and therapists responded to a record number of calls in 2022-23





9897

calls received by The Link's intake clinicians from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023



2298

calls related to mental health issues



1239

times crisis teams were dispatched into the community to ensure emotional and physical safety for youth at home, school or elsewhere



268

families benefited from intensive therapy from our Brief Therapy Team



714

youth remained safe and supported in crisis stabilization units for an average of 4.5 days



224

youth in crisis received educational supports to ensure they stay in school and on track to achieve their goals

New Programs

Caring Connections - Caring Connections is a new initiative that started with the support of the Department of Families in September 2022, to prevent child welfare involvement by preserving or reunifying families. Referrals are accepted from agencies or families - there does not need to be any involvement with child and family services. So far, it has proven to be an effective resource in supporting sibling groups.

Family Connections was opened in March 2023, to support families to have regular visits with their children. Agencies can book supervised daily, nightly or weekly visits for families. The team is trained in supporting parents to have a meaningful visit with their children by role modeling, homemaking, play and problem solving.







Here are a few photos of the Caring Connections Home.



Mental Health Supports

The Link offers a range of free crisis supports to help stabilize youth under the age of 21 experiencing trauma, suicidal thoughts and difficulty coping, while also ensuring emotional, physical and cultural safety and wellness for everyone in the home.

Informed by the Circle of Courage ©, The Link continues to learn about and provide trauma-informed services and support for all children, youth, adults and families served. Clinical Services at The Link are delivered using a collaborative and multi-disciplinary service delivery model, which incorporates holistic, culturally safe, trauma-informed, resilience-based and evidence-informed interventions.

Our organization has a diverse group of experienced and knowledgeable people representing various professional disciplines, which include occupational therapists, marriage and family therapists and Master of Social Work and Master in Counselling Psychology therapists to help steer the organization toward clinical excellence in supporting our young people.

Circle of Courage

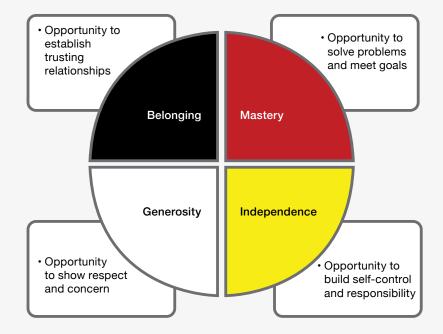
The Circle of Courage is based on the Medicine Wheel, which for First Nations people of Manitoba represents the need for all things to be in balance and harmony. The four colours represent teachings and understandings of how we look after each other and the environment, while on the four points of the cross are the crucial development needs of children: belonging, mastery, independence and generosity.

- Belonging: Wider family connections and belonging
- Mastery: Mastery of life skills and capacity to learn and communicate thoughts and feelings
- Independence: Physical growth and development towards autonomy and independence
- Generosity: Capacity for happiness, faith, a sense of purpose and contemplating the needs of others through generosity

Brief Therapy Team

The Link has a team of therapists that collaborates with youth in crisis and other significant parties in developing an overall therapy plan providing intensive individual and family oriented therapy. Therapy is brief and is completed in six to eight scheduled sessions with clearly defined goals and practical strategies and focused on the crisis as defined by the youth and family. Therapists can also make referrals to the consulting psychiatrist for psychiatric assessment or consultation as required. After resolution of the crisis, families may be referred to longer-term services, as needed, including the Connect Therapy program at The Link.

The Circle of Courage®



Momentum Program

The Link Momentum program offers a collection of groups facilitated by the clinical team. Groups are free and open to the public to self-refer or for an internal referral to be made. Some group topics include Parenting during Times of Crisis, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and Social Emotional Learning.

The program supports individuals, couples or families who are navigating a variety of challenges including: grief/loss, anxiety, depression, life transitions, issues related to gender and sexuality, divorce, communication, trauma and stress.

Connect Program

The Connect program is a free community-based therapy program accessible to youth as well as adults and families. The program is run entirely by Master's level therapy students from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. The program supports those individuals, couples or families who are navigating a variety of challenges including grief and loss, anxiety, depression, life transitions, issues related to gender and sexuality, divorce, communication, trauma and stress. The program is free to access and has a waitlist of approximately two months for service provision and is dependent on the number of grad students in placement with the organization.

The Link's Clinical team created a Play Therapy Room to add to the variety of ways to connect and engage with the youth we support. We received many donations from the community and staff to fill the room.



Here's a small sample of what Guardian Daycare donated to us for our Play Therapy Room! Offering age-appropriate toys allows the children we see to explore their feelings in a safe environment during Play-Based Therapy.



Mastermind Toys donated a train table to our new Play Therapy Room! Thanks to Kim and her team (Anastasiia and Tiffany) for the generous donation, and for the extra goodies.

TRC Call to Action - 3

We call upon all levels of government to fully implement Jordan's Principle.

The Link's Commitment and Work

Employees commit to learning about the resources available to communities through Jordan's Principle and connecting youth and families to available resources.

Youth Resource Centres (YRCs) and Emergency Shelters

The Link: Youth and Family Supports has two Youth Resource Centres (YRCs) and Emergency Shelters, one in Winnipeg and one in Thompson, which operate 24/7, as emergency/transitional shelters for youth and young adults ages 12-20.

The YRCs are a free, safe place for youth to stay overnight or short-term, where a warm bed awaits them. The centres are a crisis and basic needs resource accessible 24/7 in person or by phone.

Support is provided to youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, vulnerable of coming into contact with child welfare, criminal involvement/re-involvement and/or are at risk of sexual exploitation.

All youth accessing shelter services were provided food, clothing, hygiene needs, showers, laundry, first aid, and emergency transportation and bus tickets and when needed the YRC staff ensure that youth have the information, encouragement and support they need such as:

- · Indigenous Initiatives
- · System Navigation
- · Referrals, advocacy, resource information
- · Mental health and addictions counselling
- · Crisis intervention counselling

Parents and members of the community also use the YRC for support and information.



YRC Thompson.



YRC Winnipeg.

YRC Winnipeg



1356

individual youth were provided basic needs and supports a total of 10,149 times

This includes overnight shelter stays, walkin and call-in services



312

individual youth provided with

1234

overnight shelter stays

514

parent contacts and 2004 professional contacts

YRC Thompson

The Youth Resource Center in Thompson is a central hub where participants can access a safe place and build strong healthy relationships



288

youth supported by YRC Thompson



short-term, overnight emergency shelter beds

Offers referral, advocacy, resource information and short-term basic needs to youth on a drop-in basis



A BIG thank you to Manitoba REALTORS® Shelter Foundation for coming by with their generous donation to our emergency shelter! We bought a snazzy new fridge thanks to their support. Food plays such an important role in the overall work we do and access to a hot meal can go a long way as we help our youth navigate the complex situations and systems they're involved in. Thank you for thinking of us and giving back to the community!

Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) donated six 43" Smart TVs, a 65" UHD TV, and an Oculus Gaming System to donate our Youth Resource Centre (YRC) in Thompson - it was a very exciting day for the youth and everyone present!

Thank you MKO, your donations will definitely bring joy to the youth who come to the YRC, we're 100% sure the Oculus will be very popular.

Billie-Jo Thompson, Supervisor of the StreetReach North program, gave Grand Chief Garrison Settee, with his Assistant Kevin Carlson and MKO Urban Initiative Manager Shyanna Lynxleg, a tour of the YRC.

MKO is a nonprofit organization that works with and advocated for northern First Nations in Manitoba and strives to assist in building an urban community where youth are embraced and feel safe, enabling them to thrive.

StreetReach

StreetReach plays an important role within the facility by assisting youth who access the YRC. StreetReach is part of Tracia's Trust, the Manitoba government's strategy to prevent sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of children and youth. The StreetReach program currently includes a Winnipeg team and northern team. The program combines the mandated child welfare legislation, working in collaboration with non-government partners and law enforcement to provide a comprehensive and coordinated rapid response to address the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable children and youth.





TRC Call to Action - 22

We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.

The Link's Commitment and Work

The Link has hired a Nurse Practitioner to serve and care for youth and community. Ellisha Thunder is our N.P. and her dedication and work allows us to offer low-barrier access to primary health care. The Clinic is open to all program participants and staff.

The Link has a partnership with Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin (K.I.M), which offers primary health care at the Youth Resource Centre.

Skills4Life Programs



In 2022-2023 there were seven Skills4Life programs; the aim was to help youth and young adults achieve goals for school, work and life.

- 1. Skills4Success
- 2. Ready2Work

- 3. LifeTrain
- 4. Positive Alternatives for Youth (PAY)
- 5. Independent Living with Supports (ILS)
- 6. Housing First
- 7. Learn2Earn launched in February 2023

The programs guide youth leaving care with a period of inter-dependence and support as they navigate the realities of adult life.

Visit our website at <u>www.thelinkmb.ca</u> for more info about the Skills4Life programs.

Skills4Life and Ready2Work Program Participants and Employer Partners

55

Skills4Success and Ready2Work participants 91

LifeTrain participants

38

Independent Living with Supports participants

33

Employee partners (Skills4Success and Ready2Work)

BIRD Construction
BUILD Inc.

Canadian Goodwill Industries
Carpathia Children's Centre
Inc.

Downtown Community Safety
Partnership

Elmwood Day Nursery Feast Café Bistro

Graffiti Gallery

Homewood Suites By Hilton IKEA Canada

MANTIC

Mat Master Rental Service

McMunn and Yates Building Supplies

Oh Doughnuts

Petro Canada Madison

Pizza Hut

Planet Pantry

RnR Family Restaurant

Salisbury House of Canada

Shorty's Pizza

Southeast Child and Family Services

S.P.L.A.S.H Child Care Inc.

Teekca's Boutique

The Forks Market

The Fort Garry Hotel, Spa and Conference Centre, Ascend

Hotel Collection

The Hive Climbing

Thrive Thrift Store

Toys R Us Canada

Tru-North Supply Limited

Value Village Pembina

W.H. Escott Company Limited

Weatherwise Tent Rentals

Winnipeg Trading Post

27

Positive Alternatives for Youth (PAY) participants

17

Housing First participants



United Way Winnipeg 2022 community luncheon.



Staff preparing Christmas supplies for youth living independently.



The Link participated in over two dozen community engagement events in 2022-2023.



The Link's Skills4Success program hosted job fairs throughout the year, to help youth in Winnipeg find employment.



Food for the ILS Program Holiday Hampers for youth.

Coach Program

The Coach program is a partnership between The Link, Child and Family Services Authorities and the Winnipeg School Division with funding from the Province of Manitoba's Department of Families and the goal is to provide a wrap-around comprehensive program consisting of academics, after-school and evening programming.

The program is divided in two groups: Coach 1 is for grades 1-6 and Coach 2 for grades 7-9 and in 2022-23 there was up to 32 participants.

Coaches are employees of The Link and they provide transportation and care to the students in the off-campus classrooms. They also encourage youth to engage in community activities and offer ongoing supports to their families.

One of the most unique aspects of the Coach program is the focus on family and after-school involvement. Coach relationships go beyond the student and involve the parents and families.

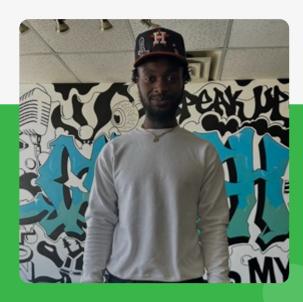
In early 2023, the Coach 2 team interviewed a wonderful person named Emmanuel Hakizamana and they were eager for him to work with the team and our youth.

After the interview was successful and Emmanuel was going through the HR process, it was noted that he only had a learner's licence - and to be eligible for jobs on the Coach team, one has to have a valid driver's licence and a car. So Human Resources worked with Kerri Koblun, Senior Program Manager for Coach 1 and 2, and Emmanuel was hired on as a term employee because the team was determined to help him get his licence.

They took any spare time they could find and had Emmanuel parallel parking and driving around the area to give him tips about his upcoming road test. One staff member even spent a few of his own evenings helping out with additional practice.

One month later, the team leader took Emmanuel to the testing centre and the rest of the team waited anxiously for a message in What's App. As soon as she could the team leader wrote...HE PASSED!

The team definitely celebrated at their staff meeting - congratulations and welcome to The Link, Emmanuel!



A Little Coaching Goes a Long Way

Emmanuel Hakizamana, a new driver and Coach!

Ahava Alpern generously donated to The Link to bring dance to the youth through Dances for Humanity!

The initiative started as a four week workshop in the fall of 2022, where attendees could try out hip hop, ballet, jazz and contemporary and then the instructors paired up with the Coach 2 program and made quite an impact on the children and staff through the spring months. We were able to meet several talented instructors and everyone who attended had so much fun.



Instructors Kathleen and Reymark.

The Youth Hub

The Youth Hub is a safe, accepting, casual space where youth ages 12-29 can hang out, connect with each other and staff and access a range of resources from food, showers, clothing, mental health supports and important skills for life while also participating in fun and engaging programming.

In 2022-2023, the Youth Hub's System Navigators and members of the team connected regularly with participants to help with current service providers or to help access new resources such as, Employment Income Assistance (EIA) and housing supports. These daily living supports benefit community members often currently or previously involved with the child welfare system and Community Living disability Services (CLdS).

The Hub is leading the implementation of Harm Reduction practices across the organization and has become known city-wide through the elimination of artificial barriers and welcoming participants from across the city.

The services offered will continue to be lifesaving by providing hope, acceptance and belonging for community members that attend The Hub.



The NTVS Clothing sent an amazing parcel of hoodies and sweatshirts that we were able to share with the youth at the Hub's Christmas Party.



The Honourable Marci len, MP, visits the Youth Hub.

Each month the Hub's team comes together to offer an amazing calendar of events and activities ranging from resume and ID workshops, art installations, games days, movie marathons, Frybread Fridays, community cleanups, family dinners, holiday decorating, Mindful Mondays, sharing circles, outings, self-care, karaoke and so much more.

The Hub is open six days a week and each day up to 60 youth and young adults attend.

This means **18,720** youth visited the Hub in 2022-2023.



Just before the holiday season was in full swing, our lovely friends at Decadence Chocolates partnered with The Link to bring stockings full of sweet treats to our kids at The Hub! Thank you for the delicious and generous gifts.



A fresh pair of socks goes a long way for our youth. So you can only imagine our excitement when Province of Canada contacted us about their 1 for 1 sock donation program! We received 500 pairs of socks to support our emergency shelter and Youth Hub! We are so grateful for another year of support.

Social Enterprises





A social enterprise is a community-based business that sells goods or services to achieve a social, cultural or environmental purpose. Some of the possible and positive community outcomes generated by social enterprises include: the creation of jobs for people facing barriers to employment, reduced poverty, environmental sustainability, reduced crime, improved health outcomes and inclusive, sustainable, local economies.

Mayfair Innovations

Mayfair Innovations provides friendly and reliable year-round yard services throughout Winnipeg including lawn cutting, spring and fall clean-up, snow removal, scrap pickup, shed and fence building, courier work, inter-office jobs and internal move jobs and small renovations.

The program provides youth 16-25 years of age with mentorship, paid training and the opportunity to learn industry and life skills as they work alongside the team.

Casey St. Paul is one of the youth employed by Mayfair Innovations and in December 2022, he shared his story with us.

"Every day I see a new part of the city, I learn a new skill and I connect with a supportive team that encourages me to be my best."



Casey and Allan.

My name is Casey St. Paul and I am 28 years old. I am from Berens River First Nation and spent my early days in Selkirk, Manitoba.

My family moved to Winnipeg when I was nine years old and shortly after we got settled, my Dad passed away. This loss was overwhelming and with a lack of community resources...it wasn't long before my life started to go downhill. I got myself into trouble over the years and it wasn't good.

In 2019, I was released from Milner Ridge Correctional Centre and was introduced to Life Train, a program of The Link that helps young adults develop preemployment and job search skills and nurtures their ability to speak up for themselves. I remember one day we went to a career fair at St. Vital Centre. After months of applying for jobs with no luck and feeling pretty down about my situation - I had a panic attack. I don't know if you've ever had one or not, but let me tell you it was an experience I'll never forget.

Thankfully the team at The Link helped me stay on track. It wasn't long before I met Allan, my supervisor, at Mayfair Innovations, one of The Link's social enterprises.

When I first started with Mayfair Innovations we learned about general labour skills and how to incorporate structure and routine into our daily lives.

I did everything from lawn cutting, spring and fall clean-up, snow removal, scrap pickup, painting, shed and fence building, courier work, inter-office jobs and internal move jobs. The program provided me with mentorship, paid training and the opportunity to learn industry and life skills in a supportive team environment.

It was a lot of hard work and even though it was quite an adjustment compared to my old lifestyle, I loved every minute.

Once I gained steady employment it allowed me to reconnect with my sons, and then in early 2020, I welcomed my first daughter to the world and from the moment of her arrival, she changed my life for the better. If I hadn't turned things around, I don't think I would be here today - a Dad to my two daughters and two sons. I would be in jail or maybe even dead.

Being a Dad keeps me busy in the off hours, but when I am at work I love the calming effect that painting gives me and the pride that building something brings. It is such a good feeling to see a fence or a shed we've constructed together from scratch and to know that it will be there for a long time.

Now that I am older, I know I had a good upbringing, but it was me that made the wrong choices in my younger years. The people and programs at The Link gave me the chance to envision a different future for myself and my family.

I've overcome a lot of obstacles with a lot of hard work and I couldn't have done it alone. Years later I am still with Mayfair Innovations and I am so proud of the foundation I have built with the help of Allan and everyone on the team. I am forever grateful.







Mayfair Innovations Truck and Team with The Link at the 2022 Pride Parade!

Velotecha

Velotecha is a social enterprise dedicated to working alongside youth as they learn new skills and gain employment while providing bike sales, service, and repairs. The program was launched in the fall of 2021 by The Link: Youth and Family Supports in collaboration with the WRENCH and Mayfair Innovations. The Velotecha venture is a joint initiative between The Link and the WRENCH who provided programming, logistical and equipment support and mentorship.

Velotecha is Winnipeg's newest bike service, which also offers a practical response to winter storage challenges for cyclists; the mission is to provide meaningful experience and education to youth while performing quality bike sales, service, and repair. Youth apprentice with a lead bike mechanic and perform the repairs over the winter; this opportunity helps build their resume with real experience.

Visit www.velotecha.com for more information

Follow Velotecha on (f) (iii) @velotecha







On July 21, 2022, Velotecha hosted the grand opening of the Bike Lab – a bright green, refurbished shipping container that serves as a welcoming riverside landmark and the latest link to the city's cycling community.

Velotecha by the **Numbers**



core values in Velotecha's workshops; Mastery, Teamwork and Spirit



youth built their own bike with refurbished parts and completed the "earn a bike" program



bikes stored during the winter storage season



youth employed in the first season



Cassy earns first bike.



Velotecha Grand Opening.



Bike Week Winnipeg - Velotecha Pit stop.



Velotecha's first customer.



Parts Collaboration with The WRENCH.

Life at The Link

There are many opportunities at The Link for staff to learn, to explore new experiences and to celebrate our community and one of the ways this is possible is through The Link's Social and Wellness Committee. The Swellness Committee strives to bring the team together through respectful social, recreational and wellness events and activities that reflect our cultural values and issues that are important across the organization.

Here are a few snapshots from the year!



Mental Health Awareness Month was a team effort, there was candy carts, pancake breakfasts and ice cream treats as well as walks and pilates.







Community Clean-Up - we had staff, youth, Board members and community come together to beautify the space outside of our main offices and to share a meal together. It was a great day.







Many, many hearts came together to help create The Link's beautiful contributions to the 2022 Pride Parades in Winnipeg and Thompson!





In June 2022, we had a celebration and Fiesta for Philippine Heritage Month.





Wellness Bingo Challenge Winter 2023

In winter 2023, the Swellness Committee hosted the 2nd Annual four-week "Wellness Challenge" to help encourage, support and inspire each other. Participants played Bingo by completing self-care activities related to physical, emotional, and mental health.





The Link's Wellness Room is an initiative of the Swellness Committee opened to all staff on February 17, 2023. A very BIG THANK YOU to the folks who brought in donated items to help make the space welcoming and cozy!



The Link's Swellness Committee hosted a Mini Film Festival to celebrate Black History Month that featured films from the National Film Board of Canada's Black History Month playlist.



The northern team shows their support for Pink Shirt Day 2023.

United Way Winnipeg Campaign

Our organization came together for the 2022 United Way Winnipeg Campaign and it was a huge success!

The creativity and generosity was amazing and we had so much fun throughout the two weeks with our staff lunches, Halloween party, Time, Talent and Treasure Auction and pancake breakfast.

Thank you to everyone in The Link's community that helped raise funds for such an important organization that does so much good and gives back to many, many people and organizations across the city.





Donors, Donations and Drives

On behalf of our youth, our families, our community—thank you to our donors for the ongoing support!

Together, we are changing lives for the better and we are grateful for the respect and care you give our community and our future generations; your continued commitment to walk alongside us to do this work is appreciated.

The Thompson Business Community donated to our Amazing Resource Rally for Youth in March:

- Speedy Auto Glass
- Domino's Pizza
- Salon Italia

StreetReach

- Northern Inn & Steak House
- · Safeway Canada
- Home Hardware

In 2022-2023 there were



153
Gifts and In-Kind
Donations



Birchwood Automotive generously donated mugs and to that we filled with goodies and handed them out to youth in our Independent Living Services and Housing First programs.



Thanks so much to Tanesha for the donation to our Youth Resource Centre! Donations of hygiene supplies and clothing like this ensure we can meet the immediate needs of our youth, especially those who spend a few nights with us.



Thanks to the VERY generous donation of new tools from Princess Auto, our youth will have lots of opportunity to learn about all things maintenance and gain meaningful, hands-on work experience in the process.



Many thanks to Becky for dropping off another generous donation of plants, shrubs and seeds this year with the help from Canadian Tire on Grant Avenue in Winnipeg.



Thank you to our friends at Manitoba Possible for the generous donation of dry goods for the Youth Hub; we were so honoured to be a recipient of your food drive!



What's one way to get youth excited about a career in the trades? You give them a set of tools! Thanks to Manitoba Building Trades Institute (MBTI) we received a generous donation of 12 tool kits—we're talking hand saws, hammers, screw drivers, and MORE!



We received a wonderful donation of warm clothing and hygiene products from Clear Concepts to support our YRC shelter and Youth Hub! The ongoing support of our programs is so appreciated. Extra thanks to United Way Winnipeg for helping them organize their pop-up Day of Caring.



If you live/work/play in Osborne Village, there's a good chance you've seen Doug around! As a musician, Doug wanted youth to experience the gift of music and over the summer, he fundraised for some brand new instruments for our Youth Hub! Thank you so much.



Princess Auto brought a generous donation of socks, mitts, toques and all the warm things to keep our youth toasty throughout the winter. We are so grateful for their ongoing support!



We were so thankful to receive Manitoba Mukluk's donation of close to 100 pairs of cozy house slippers, which were presented to our awesome kids at the Youth Hub at their Christmas Party.



Some wonderful folks from Assiniboine Credit Union generously donated BAGS AND BAGS AND BAGS of much needed items!

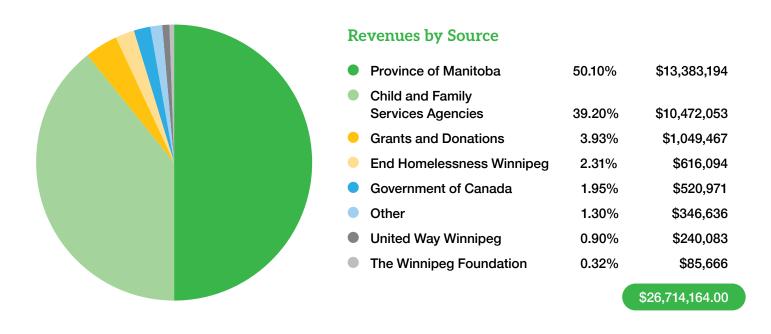


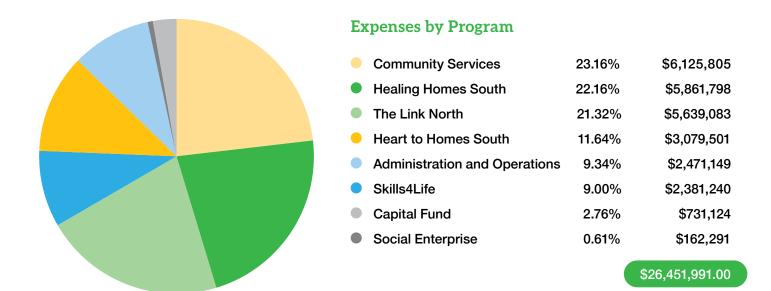
Sukhpreet Singh, owner of Bar Burrito at River Grove, delivered quesadillas, bottles of water and a bag of freshly made chips to our Youth Resource Centre!

| Financial Information

Fiscal Year: April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023

The Link is grateful for the financial support received from our funders and donors that ensures we can provide healing and hope throughout the province of Manitoba.





The Link: Youth and Family Supports is grateful to the following funders without whom our work would not be possible:



















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