

Annual Report 2023-2024

*Together Towards Tomorrow: Walking Alongside
Youth and Families in Manitoba*

APRIL 1, 2023, TO MARCH 31, 2024



The Link
Youth and Family Supports





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, Anishiniimowin, Dene, and Dakota land and in the Homeland of the Red River Métis. 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.

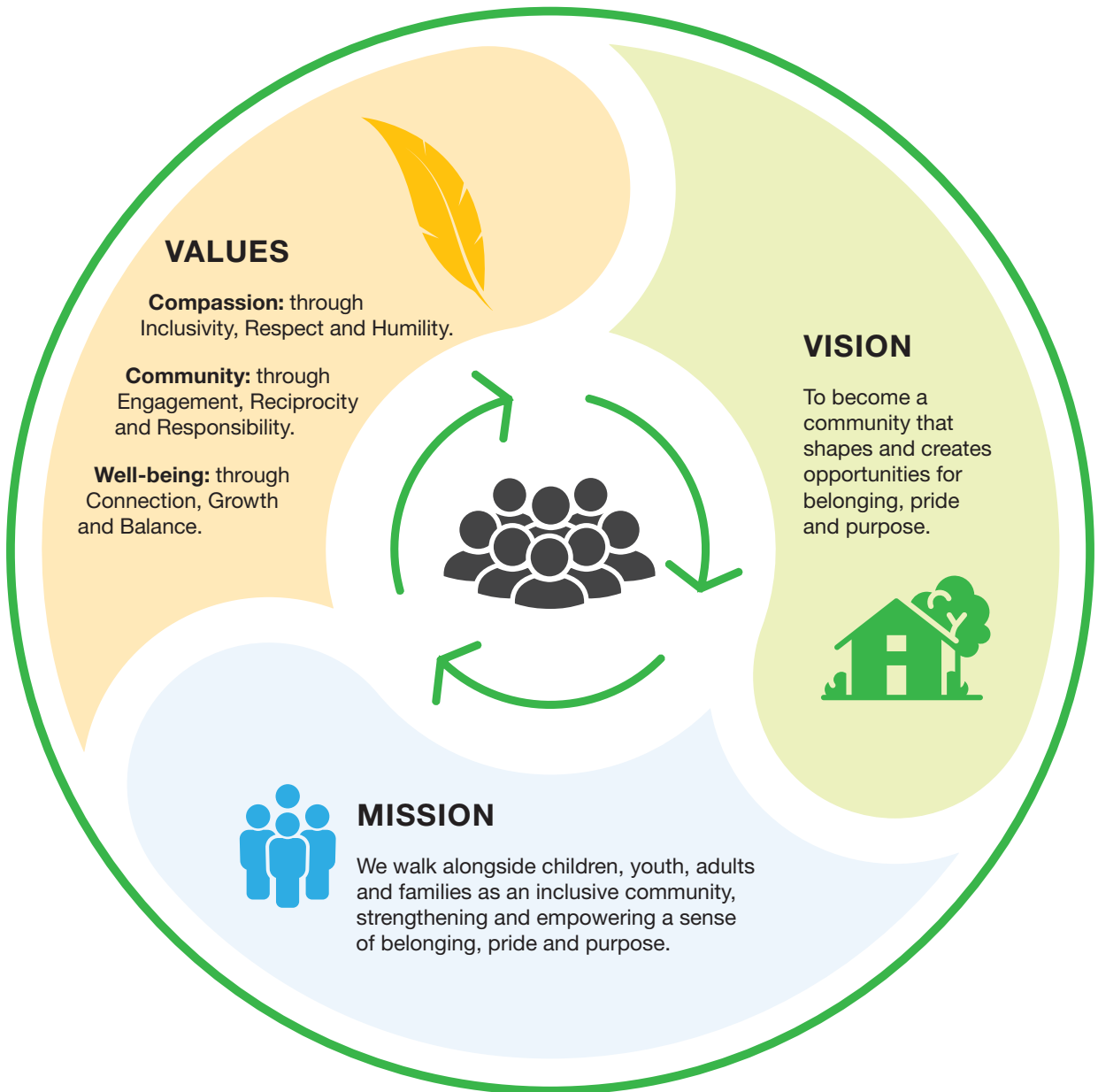


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Message from the Board Chair and Chief Executive Officer

- Welcome to The Link: Youth and Family Supports' Annual Report for the fiscal year 2023-2024!
- We're thrilled to share with you our journey, achievements and impacts over the past year that speaks to our commitment to empowerment and resilience.

The Link is more than just a not-for-profit organization; we're a community of change makers, advocates and allies dedicated to supporting youth and families in realizing their full potential.

Our approach is simple yet profound: we believe in harnessing strengths, nurturing resilience and empowering individuals to thrive, no matter the challenges they face. Throughout this report, you'll discover stories of courage, resilience and transformation. From providing essential services to youth and families to advocating for systemic change, every milestone and achievement we've reached is a testament to the power of community, collaboration and compassion.

Throughout the year, The Link's leadership team including the Board committed to implementing the 30 recommendations from the Deloitte report delivered on July, 2023. We are pleased to share that all recommendations lead by The Link are fully implemented. In addition, the leadership team continued to focus on improving the culture of the organization by following the cultural values action plan to improve communication, promote team building, recruit and retain staff while equipping team members with the skill set to support the community.

The Link remained committed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action as we increased partnerships with Indigenous led organizations such as, Southeast Child and Family Services, Awasis and Shawenim Abinoojii. We have

created resources, shared staffing and training resources. The resources created include three homes that ensured sibling groups could remain together while providing opportunities for family visits daily, weekly and hourly. The Rebuilding Connections homes have been attributed to 14 family reunifications. It has been a privilege and honour to work directly with these organizations to create and operate programs. We have continued to provide cultural training opportunities, under the leadership of a Knowledge Keeper, to Link programs, team members and community organizations when invited, such as Manitoba Youth Centre and Red River College Polytechnic.

We would also like to extend gratitude to our partners for their continued support, trust and confidence. Their support fuels our ambition, propels our innovation and motivates us to strive for excellence in everything we do.

Looking ahead, the Board remains fully committed to upholding the highest standards of governance while leading actions toward reconciliation and ensuring the team has the tools to deliver exceptional services. With a clear strategic roadmap and a strong foundation in place, I am confident that The Link is well-positioned to navigate future challenges and capitalize on new opportunities, delivering long-term value for the people we serve and community partners.

We thank our community and stakeholders for their unwavering support and belief in our mission.



Kerri Irvin-Ross
Chief Executive Officer



Candace Olson
President of the Board and Chair

This year we identified four priorities for the 2024-2026 strategic plan:

Creating Innovative Programs: Developing new and exciting programs that support the needs of young people and families.

Strengthening Community Partnerships: Building stronger connections with organizations in our community to provide better supports and resources for young people and families.

Further Developing Indigenous Relationships: Advancing meaningful partnerships and understanding with Indigenous communities in Manitoba to work together on making positive changes and promoting reconciliation.

Enhancing Staff Recruitment and Retention: Improving how we find and retain great staff, ensuring we have skilled and committed people to serve community members



Strategic Planning Session in October 2024 at the Manitoba Children's Museum.



Jim Krovats receives a handmade Star Blanket from the Indigenous Initiatives team.



The Link's 2023 Annual General Meeting.

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

Kaeden Merasty
Director

Mandeep Rai
Director

Sudhir Sandhu
Director

Brandy Kowal
Director (appointed September 19, 2023)

Caroline Christie
Director (appointed September 19, 2023)

Alyssa Mariani
Director (appointed March 27, 2024)

Thai Lam
Director (completed term September 19, 2023)

Jim Krovats
Director (completed term September 19, 2023)

At The Link, we proudly support more than 10,000 youth and families across Manitoba each year. Our committed team delivers comprehensive, community-based programs and wraparound services designed to:

- Help individuals connect with their culture, identity and community.
- Enhance physical, mental and emotional well-being.
- Strengthen safe, caring and respectful relationships with family, peers and the broader community.
- Equip young people with essential skills for lifelong success, including job training and academic support.

We are dedicated to empowering individuals and families, ensuring they have the tools and support needed to thrive.

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

Throughout 2023-2024, The Link continued our work to actively address the impacts of Canada's Indian Residential School System, colonization and the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous peoples.

Our reconciliation efforts began in the spring of 2021, with a tailored organizational development process. Designed by the Manitoba Harm Reduction Network and Ka Ni Kanichihk, this process was specifically adapted for non-Indigenous organizations like The Link to enhance our understanding and response to these historical and systemic issues.

The core aim of this initiative is to deepen employee knowledge of Canada's colonial history, the Residential School System and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action.

Every department within The Link is dedicated to integrating these Calls to Action into our operations. This commitment is focused on enhancing our services to be more culturally appropriate and supportive for Indigenous youth and families, ensuring a safer and more respectful environment for all.

The Indigenous Initiatives team led by the Knowledge Keeper provides guidance and cultural teachings, land based activities and hosts events for team members, youth and community to help each of us on the path of reconciliation.



If you would like to learn more:



- Read the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action'
- Watch 'Every Child Matters: Reconciliation through Education' videos
- Visit National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) website: www.nctr.ca



Meet Darius



“After working at Velotecha, I developed new skills, I know more things about bikes than I ever thought I would. I know a whole other trade now and I helped to build a business.”

My name is Darius, and I am 19 years old, and I am from Winnipeg, Manitoba. I’d like to share my story about my time at The Link and Velotecha and how the experience helped pave the path for my future.

I had been a participant at The Link and familiar with their programs for some time, but I first discovered the bike lab in October 2021, when Riley Woodcock came to The WRENCH and offered me an opportunity to work at Velotecha, one of The Link’s social enterprises.

Once I started working, I was surprised at how quickly I was able to adapt to being in a position where I needed to demonstrate good leadership skills. That surprised me a lot.

It didn’t take long for me to become Crew Lead and take on more responsibilities in my role.

My favourite thing about working at the lab was working with bikes, but I also loved being able to help out as much as I did, I felt valued.

If there was one word to describe my experience at Velotecha it would be “eventful”. There were a lot of opportunities during my time there to learn and develop skills, like teamwork.

The Link offers youth a good place to start, they have programs where you can build a work ethic and learn to do your best.

Riley encouraged me to join his team and without him, I might not be where I am today. I saved my earnings and enrolled full-time at the University of Manitoba where I started my first year as a university student this past September.

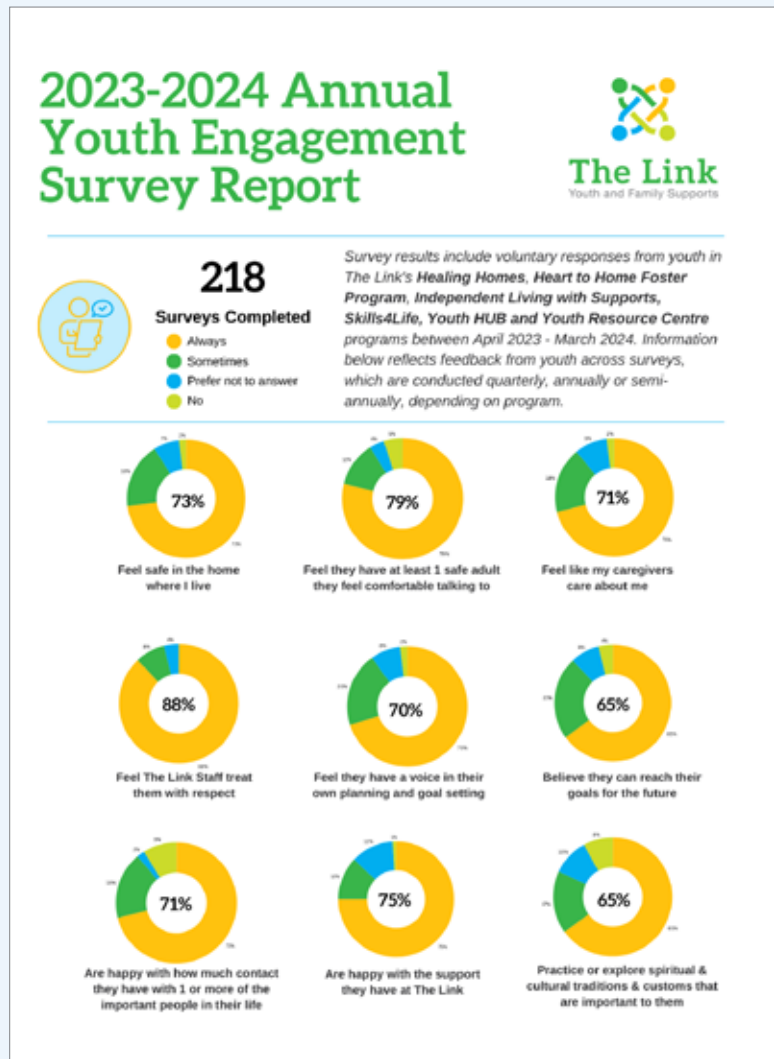


“Darius made a huge impact on me and our social enterprise; he will be a dream hire for any future employer.” – Riley Woodcock

Youth Engagement Survey Report

At The Link, our Youth Engagement Survey is a voluntary initiative designed for youth up to age 29 who access all Link programs. This survey is an important tool that facilitates meaningful, therapeutic conversations between caregivers and young individuals and helps to ensure that their perspectives are integral to shaping the quality and effectiveness of the care they receive. It also provides The Link with valuable insights and opportunities to:

- **Highlight Strength-Based and Recovery-Oriented Practices:** By valuing and integrating youth feedback, we can continuously improve the care we provide.
- **Empower Youth in Their Care:** Involving youth in their own care plans and goal setting nurtures greater engagement and personal investment in their journey.
- **Address Concerns and Celebrate Successes:** The survey helps us identify and address any concerns while also recognizing and celebrating positive developments.
- **Enhance Family and Community Engagement:** We use the feedback to strengthen and support positive interactions between youth, their families and their communities.
- **Improve Experiences and Service Effectiveness:** Insights gained from the survey help us refine our services to better meet the needs of the youth we serve.
- **Respect and Uphold Youth Rights:** This process ensures that the voices of the young people we work with are heard and their rights are respected.



Training

At The Link, our commitment to delivering exceptional programs for children, youth and families across Manitoba is unwavering. We invest hundreds of hours each year in training our team members to ensure they have the skills and knowledge needed to provide the highest quality of service.


Our extensive training programs equip employees with the tools and expertise required to meet the diverse needs of the youth and families we serve. By continuously developing our staff, we enhance our ability to offer impactful and responsive support across the organization.


The Link offers a one-week Youth Care Practitioners (YCP) 101 Orientation training for all YCP new hires to assist with foundational knowledge and building confidence before they start working in our Healing Homes. The session provides eight to ten different workshops such as Orientation to Group Care, Roles and Responsibilities when Reporting Child Abuse Disclosures, Medical Administration, Incident Reporting and Professional Boundaries.


We also successfully developed an in-house trainer for Opioid Poisoning Response (Naloxone) training, which is offered to all staff. In addition, The Link provides monthly supervisor workshops developed by our Human Resources team.

Throughout 2023-24, we offered the following new training opportunities and workshops:

- Decolonizing Anti-Racism
- Psychological First Aid
- Circle of Security
- Gender, Sexual and Relationship Diversity

 The Link offers **30** internal training opportunities

 There were **7359** hours of training completed in 2023-24

 **1041** Staff Participants



Indigenous Initiatives

Under the guidance of a Knowledge Keeper, the Indigenous Initiatives team plays a pivotal role in building connections as they engage youth, families, staff and community members, imparting skills, knowledge, traditional languages and land-based practices integral to the healing journey for Indigenous families. This work is crucial in shaping a child's identity and sense of belonging.

In alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action, which advocate for culturally appropriate and community-grounded support for Indigenous children and youth, our organization recognizes its responsibility. Despite being a non-Indigenous entity, over 80% of the youth we serve are Indigenous. It is imperative that we facilitate culturally resonant healing practices to address the impacts of ongoing colonial trauma.

Our programming, which includes monthly and weekly activities, as well as daily practices at The Link, is designed to promote a sense of belonging, mastery and confidence.

These activities are crafted to nurture cultural connections and support the healing journey of Indigenous youth and their families, ensuring that our practices are deeply rooted in cultural authenticity and respect.

The Team

- Cheryl Alexander, Knowledge Keeper
- Norway Rabliauskas, Uncle
- Blair Carriere, Uncle
- Cheyla Ponace, Youth Ambassador
- Jocelyn Pambrun, Auntie
- Cheryce Onook-Pilling, Thompson Lead

Community and Restorative Cultural Healing through Indigenous Initiatives in the North

Youth involved with the Northern programs attended local cultural events such as Pow Wows and traditional teachings and all youth groups were facilitated with Indigenous perspectives at the foundation such as:

- Sharing circles
- Language (Cree and Ojibway language incorporated into activities)
- Indigenous teachings, perspectives, values and connection to the medicine circle
- Cultural relevancy and respect
- True history and traumas acknowledged



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.



Overview of Programs and Services

Community and Youth Care Services

The Link: Youth and Family Supports offers a range of 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 is a program that 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 experienced, committed to the children in their care and evaluated through a therapeutic competencies-based tool. The foster parents, with the support of the Heart to Home team, provide safe and loving homes for children and youth where they are wrapped in critical supports and encouraged to connect the children and youth to their families, culture and communities.

Healing Homes are a network of community-based residences dedicated to providing young people aged 10-18 with safe and nurturing environments. These homes offer compassionate care, personalized support and assistance with emotional, behavioral and social needs. Each Healing Home is equipped to deliver intervention plans in partnership with families, community helpers and youth that promote belonging and skill development while engaging in cultural activities, ensuring a holistic approach.

In 2023-24, The Link operated 16 Healing Homes.

- Edgewood
- Polcyn
- St. Pierre
- Kookum's House
- Aspen
- Willow
- Wuskwatim
- Transition South
- Transition North
- Bannerman
- Ottawa
- Kent Road Lodge
- Caring Connections and Rebuilding Connections Homes (4)

Caring Connections is a family preservation and reunification program, which offers a safe, nurturing environment with mental health and clinical supports available on-site, as well as access to The Link's multi-disciplinary clinical team. In 2023-24, the program supported 35 youth and their families.

Rebuilding Connections homes support families and offer a place where they can connect and 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. A safe, supportive atmosphere where you can build trusting and therapeutic relationships with families using interventions that help to strengthen families, increase resilience to adversity and stress and promote healthy child development.

Kent Road Lodge is a community-based Out of Home Respite and Family Support Resource program aimed at preventing children with significant mental health challenges from entering CFS care through scheduled out of home respite in tandem with clinical supports to the family beginning before, during or soon after the child's respite stay.

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. 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.

24/7 Crisis Line



Callers will speak to The Link's team of intake clinicians who help youth, families and caregivers experiencing mental health concerns, conflict and other challenges.



8436 calls received by The Link's intake clinicians from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024



482 youth remained safe and supported in crisis stabilization units for an average of 3.4 days



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



495 families benefited from intensive therapy from our Brief Therapy Team

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

1.
Mental health concerns

2.
Self-harm or at-risk behaviours

3.
Behavioral difficulties

4.
Parent/child conflict

Brief Therapy Team is 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.

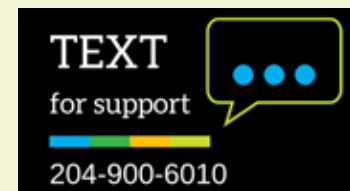
The Youth Hub is a safe, accepting, casual space where youth ages 12-29 can hang out, connect with each other and staff and access a range of resources from food, showers, clothing, mental health supports and important skills for life while also participating in fun and engaging programming. The Youth Hub's System Navigators and members of the team connect 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 implements 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 at The Hub save lives and provide hope, acceptance and belonging for community members.



If you or someone you know is in crisis, call **204-949-4777** or **1-888-383-2776**.

Or TEXT us!

We launched a new 24/7 text line in the spring of 2024 to support youth in Manitoba. Those needing assistance can text "**support**" to **204-900-6010**.



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 Housing, Addictions and Homelessness. The goal is to provide a wrap-around comprehensive program consisting of academics, after-school and evening programming. The program is divided into two groups: Coach 1 is for grades 1-6 and Coach 2 for grades 7-9. 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 support to their families.



In the spring of 2023, two of the Coach 2 staff, Kurious and Emmanuel, used their skills and creativity to rebuild a recording studio, which the youth named "Broadway Studio". The result of this adventure is a non-stop flow of energy and positive learning! The youth write, produce and learn to create music that reflects who they are and what they are feeling.

Mothers in Mind (MIM) is a trauma-informed mother-child group program specifically designed to meet the parenting needs of mothers who have experienced interpersonal trauma and have children under the age of four. Developed by Child Development Institute (CDI), MIM intervenes early in the lives of mothers and their young children impacted by trauma. MIM helps mothers connect with their young children in a playful, supportive environment, where parenting strengths are highlighted and built upon. The Link has two Therapists who are trained to facilitate the Mothers in Mind Program.



Caring Dads combines elements of parenting, fathering, battering and child protection practice to enhance the safety and well-being of children. Program principles emphasize the need to enhance men's motivation, promote child-centered fathering and address men's ability to engage in respectful, non-abusive co-parenting with children's mothers. The group recognizes that children's experience of trauma will impact the rate of possible change and work collaboratively with other service providers to ensure that children benefit (and are not unintentionally harmed) as a result of father's participation in intervention. The Link has four Therapists that have been trained to facilitate the Caring Dads Program.

Mental Health and Addiction Supports

The Link offers a range of 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.

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.

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 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 graduate students in placement with the organization.

Youth Resource Centres (YRCs) and Emergency Shelters

The Link operates two Youth Resource Centres (YRCs) and Emergency Shelters, located in Winnipeg and Thompson, Manitoba. These facilities are available 24/7, serving as emergency and transitional shelters for youth and young adults aged 12-20.

Our YRCs offer a safe, supportive environment where youth can stay overnight or for short periods, ensuring they have access to a warm bed and essential resources. We provide a crisis response and basic needs support that is accessible around the clock, either in person or by phone.

We cater to youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, those vulnerable to child welfare intervention, criminal involvement or sexual exploitation.

Our YRCs also serve as a resource for parents and community members seeking support and information.

Our services include:

- **Food, Clothing and Hygiene Needs:** Providing nourishment, clothing and hygiene products.
- **Showers and Laundry:** Ensuring access to clean clothing and personal hygiene.
- **First Aid and Emergency Transportation:** Offering immediate medical assistance and transportation support.
- **Bus Tickets:** Facilitating necessary travel.
- **Indigenous Initiatives:** Cultural programs and resources.
- **System Navigation:** Assistance in accessing various support systems.
- **Referrals and Advocacy:** Helping youth connect with additional services and advocate for their needs.
- **Mental Health and Addictions Counselling:** Providing professional support for mental health and substance use issues.
- **Crisis Intervention:** Offering immediate support during critical situations.



YRC Thompson

YRC Thompson



310 youth supported



76 overnight stays



YRC Winnipeg

YRC Winnipeg



1074 individual youth were provided basic need and supports a total of **6852** times, which includes overnight shelter stays, walk-in and call-in services



402 individual youth provided with **1074** overnight shelter stays



In January 2024, Minister Bernadette Smith, Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, visited the Thompson YRC for a tour and to meet with the StreetReach team to discuss barriers in service delivery in the North.

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.

Skills4Life Programs

In 2023-2024, there were five Skills4Life programs; the aim of each was to help youth and young adults achieve goals for school, work and life.

1. Skills4Success
2. Life Train
3. Positive Alternatives for Youth (PAY)
4. Independent Living with Supports (ILS)
5. Housing First

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 www.thelinkmb.ca for more info about the Skills4Life programs.



Skills4Life team and ILS youth in Winnipeg celebrating summer with the help of the much loved, homemade Dump Tank created by Drew, The Link's on-staff teacher and educational resource support.

Skills4Life Program Participants and Employer Partners

- **49** Skills4Success participants

- **18** Employee partners (Skills4Success)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| o Applebee's | o MANTiC | o Parcel Pizza | o The Forks Market |
| o BIRD Construction Inc. | o Indigenous/ Metaphysical | o Planet Pantry | o Toys R Us |
| o Home First Winnipeg Inc. | o Mat Master | o Salisbury House | o TWCC Business Services Ltd. |
| o Knoxx Day Nursery Inc. | o Neecheewam Inc. | o Skateboard Development Manitoba Inc. (PBA – Pitikwé Skatepark) | o Vern's Pizza |
| | o Oh Doughnuts | | o Yen's Books |
| | o Panda Tea | | |

- **91** Life Train participants
- **27** Positive Alternatives for Youth (PAY) participants
- **38** Independent Living with Supports (ILS) participants
- **23** Housing First participants

Northern Housing Supports

The Link has two housing support programs in the north; the Independent Living with Supports (ILS) - ILS North Transition House Program and the ILS Apartment Program. Both programs assist youth ages 16-21 as they prepare their transition to independent living by providing educational and employment services for youth learning to live on their own and in some circumstances, with their own children.

All youth involved in the programs receive a minimum of 15 support hours per week. Support hours are determined based on individual needs and plans and are typically used to assist program participants with budgeting, shopping, child care, scheduling/attending appointments and school or employment commitments.

A social enterprise is a community-driven business that generates revenue by offering goods or services with the goal of advancing a social, cultural or environmental mission. These enterprises create a range of positive impacts, such as:

- **Job Creation:** Providing employment opportunities for individuals facing barriers to traditional job markets.
- **Poverty Reduction:** Contributing to efforts aimed at alleviating poverty within the community.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Promoting practices that protect and sustain the environment.
- **Crime Reduction:** Supporting initiatives that help lower crime rates through community engagement and job creation.
- **Health Improvement:** Enhancing overall health outcomes through accessible and supportive services.
- **Inclusive Economies:** Building local, sustainable economies that foster inclusivity and growth for all community members.

Social enterprises play a crucial role in addressing community needs while achieving meaningful, long-term social impact.

ILS North provides young adults with necessary life skills to transfer into independence. The following are some examples of the Life Skills Supports:

- Assistance to obtain all forms of identification
- Access to primary health care
- Home maintenance and tenant supports
- Money management skills
- Meal planning and preparation
- Educational and employment resources

Social Enterprises

In 2023-24, The Link proudly supported two Social Enterprises: Mayfair Innovations and Velotecha.

Mayfair Innovations

Mayfair Innovations provides friendly and reliable services year-round throughout Winnipeg including renovations and general building maintenance, scrap pickup, shed and fence building, courier work, inter-office jobs and internal move jobs.



Skyler Deschamps and Casey St. Paul

In June 2023, The Link received a letter from Stephanie Ross, Director of Operations at the North End Women's Centre (NEWC). The NEWC facilitates healing, wellness and capacity building through diverse community-centred approaches. They have been providing programs and services to women and their families in the North End of Winnipeg since 1984.

"The NEWC has been employing Mayfair Innovations for years to help them with their buildings and grounds along Selkirk Avenue in the North End and the Mayfair Innovations team members are always skilled, affordable, trustworthy, helpful, hard-working and kind.

One day while on-site during a heat wave, Skyleer and Casey were doing some demo work on NEWC grounds and they noticed a community member in distress. They immediately alerted the NEWC drop-in team who were able to call for first responders. Their quick thinking saved a life. They were also very safe and professional about disposing used needles found on the grounds with gloves and needle bins. Lastly, and most importantly, they were careful of the space they took up as men at the centre and were very respectful to our community members and participants.

Thank you, Casey and Skyleer, for the excellent work you do in the community!"



Velotecha

Velotecha is a social enterprise committed to empowering youth by providing them with valuable skills and employment opportunities in the bike repair industry while also offering a full range of services, including bike sales, maintenance and repairs.

Velotecha focuses on delivering exceptional service while offering meaningful educational experiences for youth. Apprentices work alongside a lead bike mechanic, gaining hands-on repair experience throughout the winter months. This practical training helps build their resumes and prepares them for future career opportunities.

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, also known as the Swellness Committee. The committee strives to bring all teams 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 of our favourite highlights from the past year - Wellness Bingo, Puppy Therapy visit, holiday deliveries, decorating contest, spring planting party, Pride parade and our International Youth Day Carnival!



Community Engagement

At The Link we are dedicated to community engagement that create meaningful interactions and collaborative efforts. By actively listening to and partnering with local organizations and stakeholders we've strengthened our community ties and amplified our collective impact. From grassroots initiatives to large-scale campaigns, our engagement strategies have fostered a culture of inclusivity and responsiveness.

Our efforts in community engagement bolster trust and cooperation, but also create a foundation for future endeavors, ensuring that our work makes a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve.



Gang Life is No Life

An Impactful Initiative Against Youth Gang Recruitment

In 2023, the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police (MACP) organized a groundbreaking campaign to counter rising youth gang recruitment across Manitoba. With the support of Manitoba Justice, Argyle spearheaded a digital campaign featuring compelling video content designed to resonate with young audiences and offer them alternatives to gang involvement.

The Link is the community partner for this initiative, and our website hosts the three impactful videos, styled after popular video games, depicting the

contrast between the allure of gang life and its grim reality. Each video concluded with a call-to-action to text "204-910-6010" for support from The Link: Youth and Family Supports.

The campaign initially ran for six weeks in the summer, followed by a second phase in the fall and included targeted ads on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube, focusing on platforms frequented by the target age group (13-16 years old).

The success of the 2023 campaign has led to ongoing funding and the goal is to build on the momentum while continuing to provide support to at-risk youth across Manitoba. This initiative has not only increased awareness, but also provided a lifeline to many youths considering or already involved in gang life, marking a significant step forward in gang prevention efforts.



Total Impressions:
11.68 Million



Clicks to Website:
45,666



Help Line Calls:
150 from
109 unique numbers



Top Platforms:
Snapchat, TikTok

The Link's Clinic

The Link's Clinic is a walk-in service model led by Nurse Practitioners (NPs). NPs at our clinic function as primary care providers with responsibilities like those of clinic-based physicians.

Our interprofessional team includes:

- Nurse Practitioners: Elisha Thunder and Emelita Daniel
- Medical Office Assistant: Nina Martin
- Pharmacist: Kris Allen (Sabe Wellness)

Recognizing the needs of marginalized youths and young adults (including the unhoused and those facing food insecurity), our aim is to provide barrier-free healthcare services to these vulnerable populations who struggle to access healthcare services due to self-reported racism and limited access. We meet our clients where they are and ensure a non-judgmental environment.

Our services include but are not limited to the following:

- Medical assessment, diagnosis, treatment of specific presenting complaints and follow-up
- Prescriptions and renewals
- Administration of injections (e.g., monthly injections)
- Blood pressure checks and monitoring, weight and height checks
- Wound suturing, suture removal and wound care
- Provision of harm reduction and naloxone kits in collaboration with the Youth Hub and referrals to detox programs
- Testing and monitoring for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Pregnancy testing, birth control options, emergency contraception and education on healthy sexual practices
- Immunization services, including yearly flu/ COVID-19 immunization clinics
- Cancer screenings and cervix checks for women aged 21-69



From April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, the clinic served an estimated total of **567** clients.

Approximately **175** of these clients sought harm reduction care during this period.

Our partnership with the Youth Hub has **increased** accessibility to harm reduction kits and Narcan, resulting in a reduction of on-site near overdose incidents compared to previous years.

Our annual flu/COVID-19 clinic/project saw approximately **75** participants receiving influenza/COVID-19 immunizations.



Looking ahead, we are committed to expanding our immunization efforts, including another clinic scheduled for the **fall of 2024**.




United Way Winnipeg Campaign

Thanks to the incredible support and enthusiasm from everyone involved in our 2023 United Way Winnipeg Campaign. The dedication and participation in The Link's week-long event have not only supported the United Way's vital work, but have also strengthened our organization's commitment to giving back to our communities.

The United Way plays a crucial role in enhancing the well-being of our province, city and communities and our organization is proud to contribute to this mission. This year's campaign was a testament to the generosity and collective spirit of our team.

Congratulations to all for your outstanding contributions and for making a meaningful difference through our activities such as, the pancake breakfast, candy cart and costume contest, pizza lunch, Bannock tail sales and the ever-popular Time, Talent and Treasure Auction. Your generosity truly embodies the spirit of giving!



 In 2023-2024, there were **241 Gifts and In-Kind Donations**

Over **\$140,000** received in donations



Donors, Donations and Drives

On behalf of our youth, families and the entire community, we extend a heartfelt thank you to our generous donors. Your unwavering support is transforming lives and making a profound impact on our future generations.

Together, we are creating positive change and strengthening our communities. Your dedication and respect for our mission inspire us every day. We are truly appreciative of your ongoing commitment to walk alongside us in this important work.

Thank you for being an essential part of our journey.



In the spring, Enterprise and the National Hockey League Players' Association teamed up to celebrate every NHL on-ice hat trick with a donation to a charity of the player's choice. Evander Kane of the Edmonton Oilers recorded two hat tricks; The Link was selected as the recipient of the donation!



Our neighbour, Doug, a longtime resident and local musician of Osborne Village, spent the summer of 2023 busking and "Playing it Forward". He raised funds for The Link's Youth Hub to purchase musical instruments, to help to develop arts-based programming.



Thank you to the Leftovers Foundation in Winnipeg for their donation of delicious, fresh, baked goods for Easter! The Youth Hub and our Youth Resource Center enjoyed these goodies immensely.



Cookies By George donated delicious treats to our 2nd Annual International Youth Day Carnival!



A BIG Thank you to Sysco for donating and delivering The Hub's Holiday Food order.

The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act

The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act gives employees a clear process for disclosing concerns about significant and serious matters (wrongdoing) in the Manitoba public service, and protects employees who make those disclosures from reprisal. The act builds on protections already in place under other statutes, as well as collective bargaining rights, policies, practices and processes in the Manitoba public service.

Wrongdoing under the act may be: contravention of federal or provincial legislation; an act or omission that endangers public safety, public health or the environment; gross mismanagement; or knowingly directing or counseling a person to commit a wrongdoing. The act is not intended to deal with routine operational or administrative matters.

A disclosure made by an employee in good faith, in accordance with the act, and with a reasonable belief that wrongdoing has been, or is about to be, committed is considered to be a disclosure under the act, whether or not the subject matter constitutes wrongdoing. All disclosures receive careful and thorough review to determine if action is required under the act, and must be reported in a department's annual report in accordance with Section 29.1.

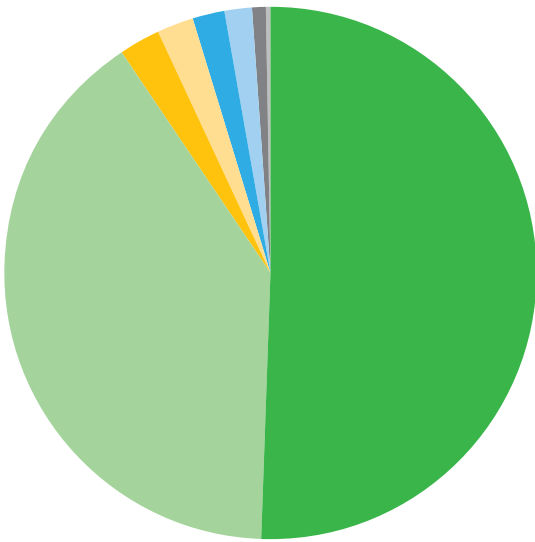
The following is a summary of disclosures received by The Link: Youth and Family Supports for fiscal year 2023-24.

| Information Required Annually (per section 29.1 of PIDA) | Fiscal Year 2023-24 |
|--|---------------------|
| The number of disclosures received, and the number acted on and not acted on. Subsection 29.1(2)(a) | NIL |
| The number of investigations commenced as a result of a disclosure. Subsection 29.1 (2)(b) | NIL |
| In the case of an investigation that results in a finding of wrongdoing, a description of the wrongdoing and any recommendations or corrective actions taken in relation to the wrongdoing, or the reasons why no corrective action was taken. Subsection 29.1(2)(c) | N/A |

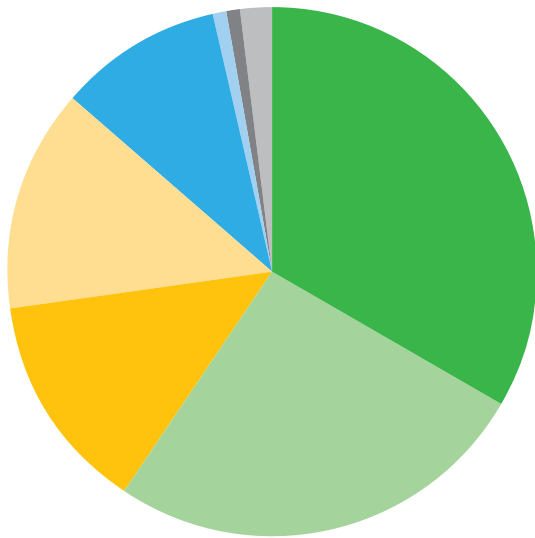
2023-2024 Finances

Fiscal Year: April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024

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.



\$24,632,277



\$24,609,512

Audited Financials Statement: 24,609,512.00



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





The Link
Youth and Family Supports

thelinkmb.ca



Winnipeg

175 Mayfair Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3L 0A1
204-477-1722
info@thelinkmb.ca

Thompson

102-83 Churchill Drive
Thompson, MB R8N 0L6
204-677-7870
info@thelinkmb.ca

Charitable Registration Number: 131215196RR0001