

NORTHWIND
Family Ministries



Annual Report

2024 - 2025

photo by Torika Martin

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“If we are to love our neighbors, before doing anything else we must see our neighbors. With our imagination as well as our eyes, that is to say like artists, we must see not just their faces but the life behind and within their faces. Here it is love that is the frame we see them in.”

*Frederick Buechner,
Whistling in the Dark: A Doubter's Dictionary*

Faces of NorthWind



CEO Report

Change comes with loss but it also brings opportunity!

Last fiscal and program year (Sept 2024 to Aug 2025) was a year of many changes. Some, such as Wes and Sue retiring and Bera's health challenges, brought sadness for the team, but also gratitude for their years of service and for the ways they continue to contribute as they are able.

Here are a few examples of developments that have spurred new opportunities:

- Carol became the new board chair when Raymond completed two four-year terms (maximum terms before a break is required).
- Jeff now oversees the finances.
- Deanna changed roles from Executive Assistant to Communications & Connections Department Head, and Gretchen was hired as my Executive Assistant.
- Alissa became the Counselling Department Head.
- We contracted an external clinical supervisor to lighten my load as clinical supervision.
- Sherrie-Lee and Hannah now also assist with supervision of the social workers and psychotherapists respectively.
- Jeremy, who helped start Next Steps, became a full-time pastor at a local church and was replaced by Jasmin as the Next Steps program lead.
- Justin prepared to take over as the Spiritual Growth Department Head as Joyce retires in December of 2025.
- New staff were hired to replace others as people moved on in their careers and family life.
- NorthWind also became the part of the Rural Community Immigration Program which allows us to support the ongoing employment of many of our current staff.

*Throughout this report you will notice wonderful pictures of our Indigenous friends wearing **Ribbon Skirts** and **Shirts**. We want to highlight these beautiful aspects of their culture.*

In the midst of change, God's nearness has been felt. I hold unto a passage that was spoken over me this year from Isaiah 30:21, "whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, 'this is the way; walk in it'." It has brought reassurance that God is leading us, that he is the one in charge of NorthWind's future and calling.

As you read through the pages of this annual report, I trust you will hear how God has been leading us and how people are experiencing a healthier attachment with Creator God, their families, themselves and the Land.

We are so thankful for each of you as you have been journeying with us through these changing times. Thank you for giving of your time and resources. Thank you for praying for us as we continue to serve the Indigenous people of Thunder Bay and Northern Ontario.



Bonita Ledua
Chief Executive Officer
NorthWind Family Ministries

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, 'this is the way; walk in it.'"

Isaiah 30:21



Board Chair Report

When I think of the ministry of NorthWind Family Ministries, I am reminded of the enduring wisdom found in Galatians 5:22–23 (TPT), which speaks of divine love in all its varied expressions:

“Joy that overflows, peace that subdues, patience that endures, kindness in action, a life full of virtue, faith that prevails, gentleness of heart, and strength of spirit.”

My association with the founders of NorthWind Family Ministries, Bera and Bonita Ledua, has been long and varied — as friend, co-worker, colleague, psychotherapy supervisor, and most recently, as Board Chair. Through each of these seasons, I have witnessed their steadfast faith and deep compassion as they have led this ministry with grace and courage.

As a Board, when we reflect on our work over the past year, we are continually reminded of the many ways God’s blessings rest upon this ministry. From each dedicated staff member and volunteer to the church teams who faithfully come to lend a hand in whatever way is needed during their week of service, the Fruit of the Spirit is on full display. In every act of care, every word of encouragement, and every moment of quiet perseverance, we see love in action — a living testimony to God’s goodness and faithfulness.

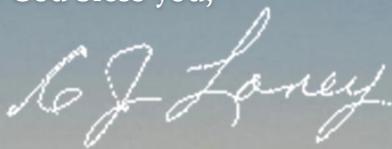
This year, as a Board, we have faced and navigated significant challenges — including funding and resource constraints, staffing needs, and unexpected crises. Throughout it all, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to the mission and ministry of NorthWind Family Ministries, keeping the needs of our community at the heart of every decision.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the dedicated staff and volunteers who continue to embody the spirit of NorthWind through their compassion, resilience, and unwavering commitment to those we serve. Their daily efforts — whether providing care, offering support, or ensuring the smooth operation of our programs — make a profound difference in the lives of individuals and families across our region.

To our volunteers, thank you for giving so generously of your time and hearts. Your presence and dedication remind us that true community is built through service, kindness, and faith in action.

As we look ahead, we do so with faith and confidence that God will continue to guide and sustain this ministry. The year ahead will bring new challenges and opportunities, and we remain committed to walking forward together — Board, staff, volunteers, and community — in hope, purpose, and unity.

God bless you,



Carol Loney
NorthWind Board Chair

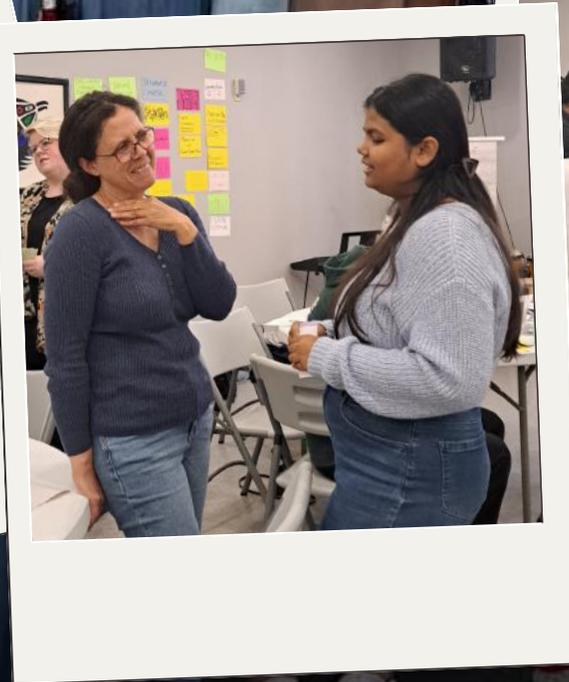


NorthWind's Board of Directors

Chair:	Members:
Carol Loney	Harvey Yesno
Vice Chair/Secretary John Condon	Milissa Ewing
Treasurer: Peggy Blekkenhorst	John Andres
	Franz Seibel

We are so thankful to the board of directors that served for the 2024-2025 fiscal/planning year.

Working Together





Our Values

FAITH

Creator God is our source of life and truth. We seek to know and imitate His Son, Jesus Christ (John 14:6-14) and commit to whole-life discipleship.

UNIQUENESS

Each person, designed by the Creator, has a unique role. We encourage each person to contribute to community, thus enhancing a sense of belonging.

STORY CENTRED

Being people-oriented is of greater importance than performance or programs. We take time to celebrate each other's victories & share in each other's struggles.

AUTHENTICITY

We see life as a process where truth is revealed as we experience authentic relationships together. We can be honest about where we are at on the journey.

ATTENTIVENESS

God's heart is attentive to those experiencing vulnerability. We actively welcome and center our focus on those without guidance, protection, means, justice & hope.

SAFETY AND DIGNITY

Too often people have been made vulnerable through abuse; therefore, we actively seek ways to create a safe environment for everyone.

COLLABORATION

We seek to work together with like-minded organizations to better serve those that experience vulnerability.

CULTURAL HUMILITY

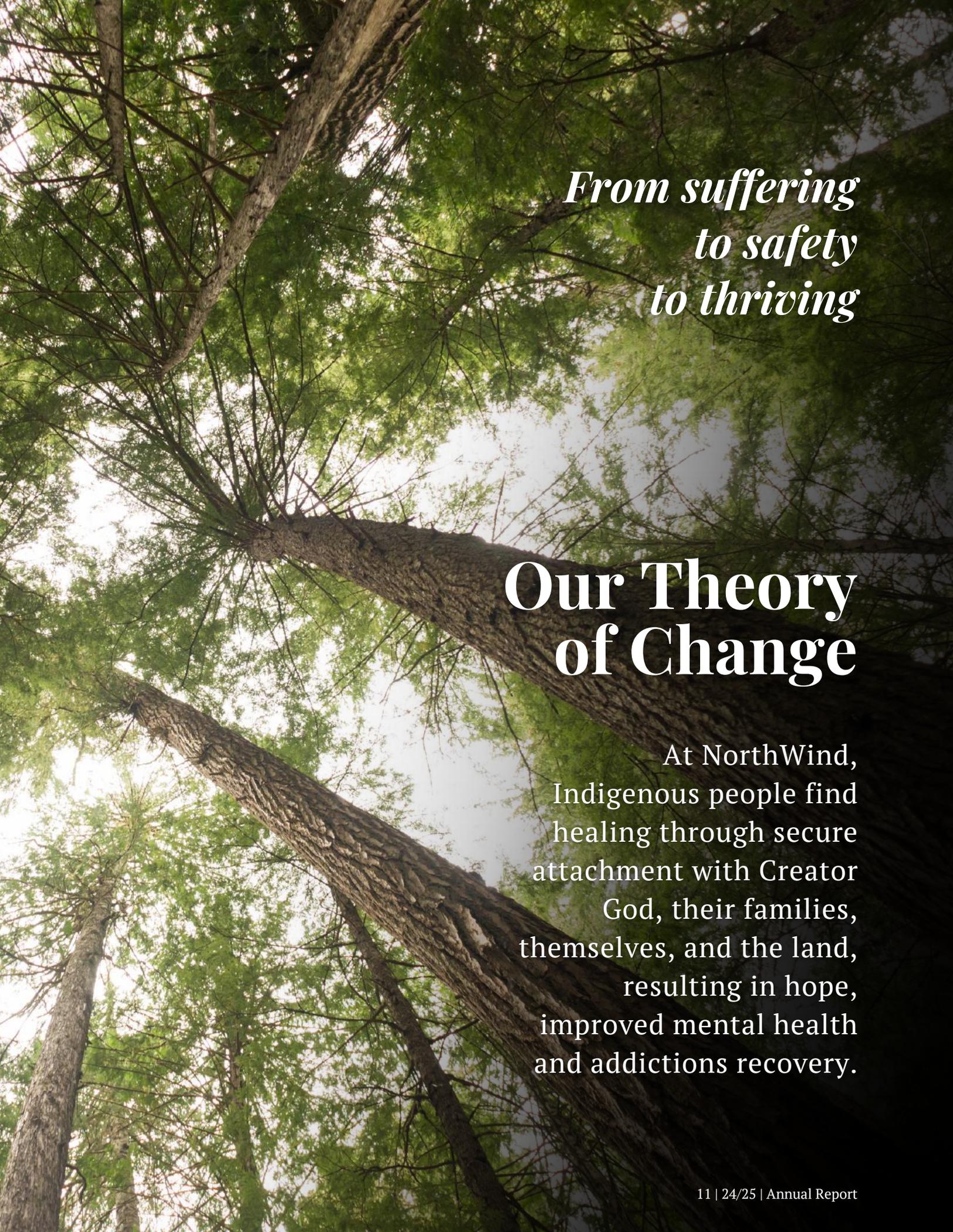
We seek to understand our own bias, to be proactive in addressing racism, and seek ways to educate ourselves in the Indigenous cultures.

CHOICE

We seek to provide an environment where care is nondirective and autonomy encouraged.

ENGAGEMENT INTO LEADERSHIP

We welcome Indigenous people as volunteers, staff, and in leadership roles.



*From suffering
to safety
to thriving*

Our Theory of Change

At NorthWind, Indigenous people find healing through secure attachment with Creator God, their families, themselves, and the land, resulting in hope, improved mental health and addictions recovery.

Counselling



The incredible team of therapists working in NorthWind's Counselling department attended to 848 clients, totaling over 5500 individual, couple and family sessions this last year. There are some clients that we have known for years and some that have just started their journey of healing with one of our therapists.

As the acting clinical supervisor, I continue to see growth in the skills of each therapist. Five of our therapists hit or are near hitting the 1000-hour mark of completed sessions, which is quite an accomplishment. Three of our social service workers returned to further education while continuing to serve on our team. Two of our mental health workers are now serving as supervisors/peer support to the other therapists. The admin team has also changed and grown. The team of five have also been growing in their skills as they are the first contact for people reaching out for therapy.

A huge highlight for me was to hand the role of counselling department head to Alissa Darrow. She has grown so much as both a therapist and a leader over the six years she has served on the team.

The counselling department experienced a heavy blow when Indigenous Services Canada cancelled the counselling program for residential school survivors and their decedents due to government spending cuts. This negatively impacted 218 clients immediately. It also greatly impacted the amount of time people are waiting to see a therapist due to the setbacks in the system and the hoops that our therapists must jump through. Some northern clients have had to wait four months to return to their counsellor due to challenges with the new government system for Indigenous people living in northern communities.

The need continues to grow. ***We are presently looking for three registered social workers and two registered psychotherapists to join the team as the waitlist continues to lengthen.*** As you will read in the compass report, we are continuing to serve in northern communities as well as in our counselling offices at 141 May St and at 138 May St in the Next Steps program.

-Bonita Ledua, RP, MAFT



Bonita Ledua RP, MAFT



Alissa Darrow, RPC, RSSW

848

Counselling clients supported this year through over

5500

sessions



Heather Le Quant, RP (Qualifying)



Hannah Chun, RP



Florence Tan, RP



Kyla Tempelman, RP (Qualifying)



Julie McKenna, RP



Kelsey Hall, Intern



Sherrie-Lee Petrie, RSW



Lauren Hartman, RSSW



Merline Desrameaux, Intern



Heide Nicholson, RSW



Khandra Brown, RSSW



Jubin Abraham, RSW

Family Strengthening Program

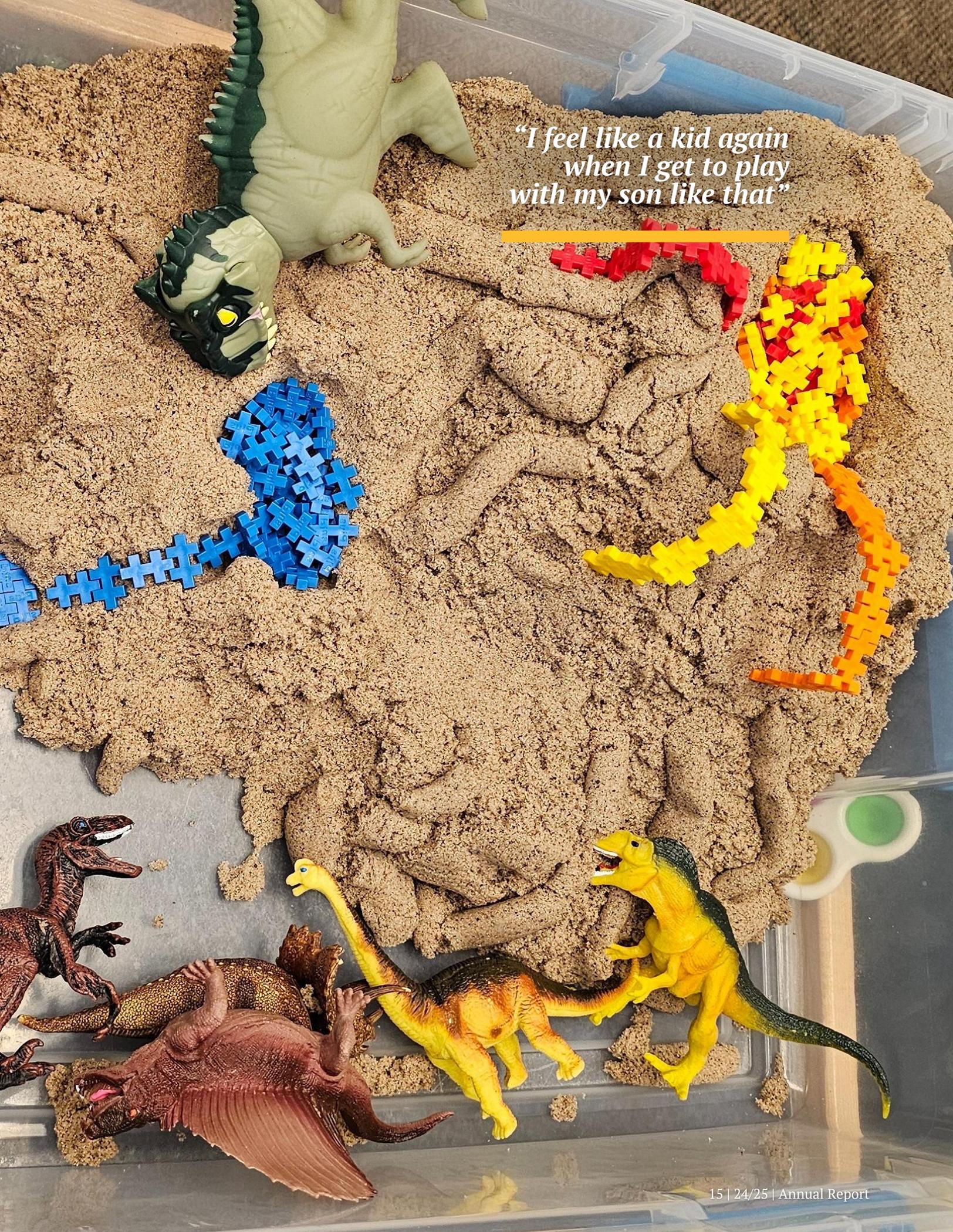
During our Family Strengthening Program I had just finished a session with the mom of this family, and we were walking down the hallway together when we heard dinosaurs roar, planning for the next scene, and laughter coming from the dad and son in one of the play rooms. As we entered the room, we saw their train track and war zone set up and they did not even notice us when we appeared. It was time for the dad's counselling session so play time was put on pause. When talking with the dad, I shared with him that if I had not heard a deep voice I would have thought two children were playing together. The dad smiled and responded "I usually feel like a kid again when I get to play with my son like that." That made this family therapist's heart mushy, knowing that the time this family had been spending at NorthWind was creating moments of healing and memories for their family, and in this case, strengthening the bond between the dad and his son.

In the Family Strengthening Program we often talk about how play can have an equal role in our healing from past wounds and in developing secure attachment. Often the statement rings true that "laughter is the best medicine." As we have moments of fun, laughter, and play, it helps in building attachment with ourselves, with our families and loved ones as well as it increases our coping capacity and our resilience when difficult situations arise. This story is representative of one of the eleven families that have attended this program in the past year and shows that when we find meaningful connection with one another it can impact our mental health and our healing journeys.

-Heather Le Quant - Family Counsellor



*"I feel like a kid again
when I get to play
with my son like that"*





Cooking For Life

Weekly Cooking for Life classes are held in person at our May Street location, with online options available for those unable to make the trip. This year, we added an exciting series of classes, in cooperation with Redwood Park Church, designed specifically for individuals accessing the church's food bank.

Thanks to funding from the Paterson Foundation, we've been able to expand the impact of this program in two meaningful ways. Students at the Redwood Park Church location receive most of their food items directly from the food bank, and through an arrangement with Niagara Christian Gleaners, we've been able to include dried fruits and vegetables—perfect for soups, stews, and stir-fries—at no cost.

This program plays an important role in addressing one of Thunder Bay's most pressing needs: food insecurity among low-income families. For those living without stable housing, access to food often depends on soup kitchens or shelters.

When someone experiencing food insecurity visits a food bank, they don't always know what to do with the items they receive. Quality ingredients may be available, but without the skills or confidence to turn them into nutritious meals, those ingredients can go unused. In these situations, junk food can seem like the easiest option; it is quick, familiar, and feels manageable when the stresses of life are overwhelming, but it often comes at the expense of health and limited financial resources.

While feeding programs are vital for daily nourishment, they can unintentionally foster dependence on ready-made meals. Cooking for Life takes a different approach. It not only provides food but also equips participants with practical cooking skills, helping them move toward independence and self-sufficiency.



Each class is well attended, but the real impact happens beyond the classroom. *Many families are now enjoying healthier, more affordable meals because one family member took part in the program.* These skills are being passed down to children, helping to build lasting habits that lead to better nutrition, wiser spending, and stronger families.

Learning to cook can be a small but powerful step toward stability. In one case, a support worker used a Cooking for Life class to help assess an individual's readiness for independent living. Stories like this remind us that a simple skill—like making a meal from scratch—can open the door to confidence, independence, and hope.

Paul is our most enthusiastic participant from the food bank.





He says he comes because we make him “feel like a king”! He also comes to Cooking for Life for “therapeutic cooking”, as he told me in his second week in our class. Unfortunately, Paul was involved in a terrible car accident that left him in a coma for weeks, resulting in medical advice being given to “pull the plug” on him. Thankfully, his story didn’t end there. ***Paul now arrives faithfully at class each week, spreading his infectious joy as he smiles and tells us that he is blessed to be alive.*** Paul was involved in therapeutic classes as a part of his recovery plan, but since those classes ended, he has been coming to our classes for support in “therapeutic” cooking instead. He tells me how Cooking for Life has been helpful in exercising his hand that was crushed in the accident and is helping him to regain dexterity. Paul says that this class is more fun and beneficial than just doing the daily prescribed physio exercises. He enjoys all kinds of fresh vegetables and is always excited to learn recipes for local vegetables, as some of them are unfamiliar to him as a Jamaican immigrant. His kids get to benefit from the meals he makes at Cooking for Life and he even made a taco casserole for his wife on her birthday! Because the program has made such a profound difference in his life, Paul tells me that he is happy to be involved in any kind of promotion that can help Cooking for Life thrive.

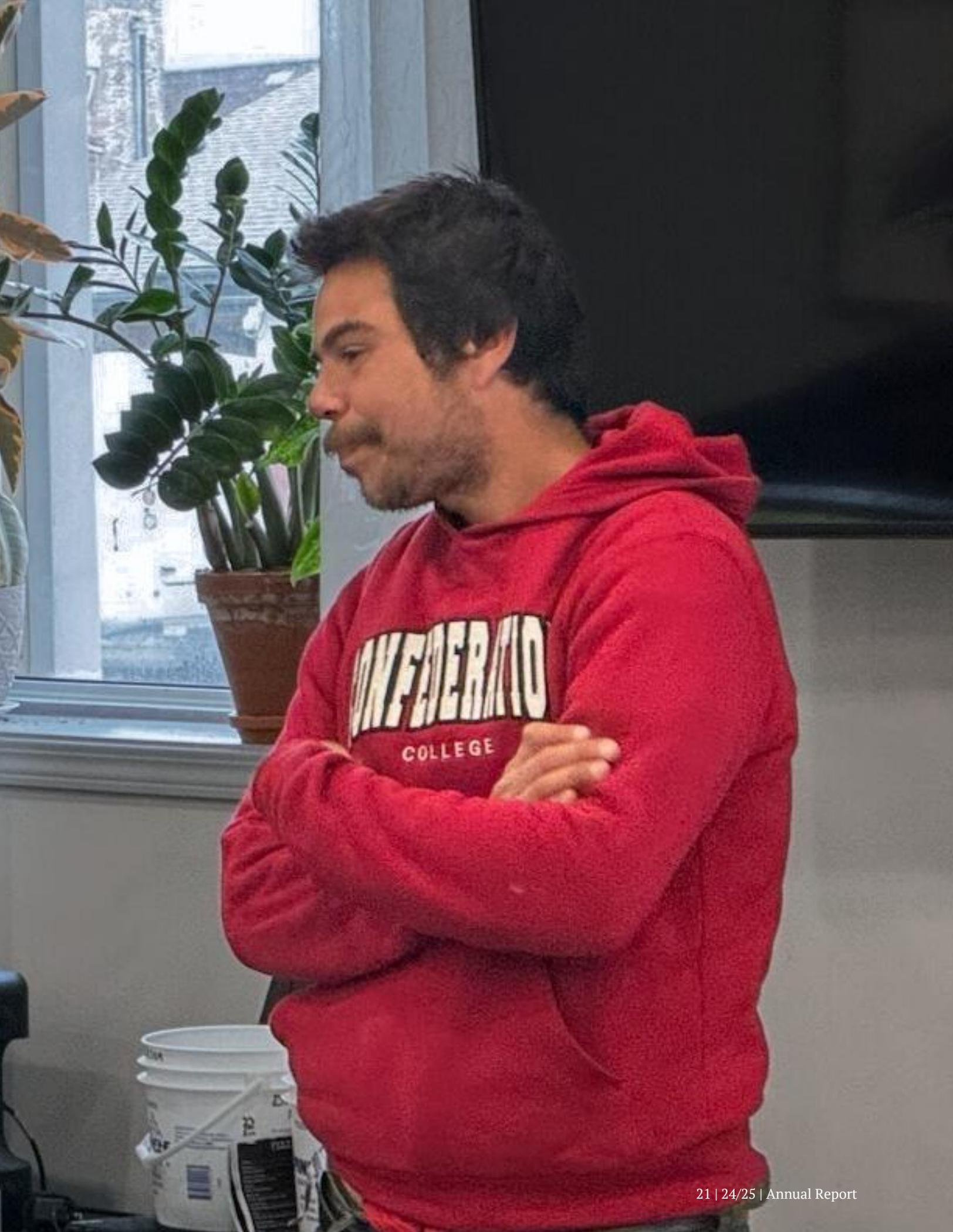
-Janelle Ledua, Cooking for Life Lead

Spiritual Growth



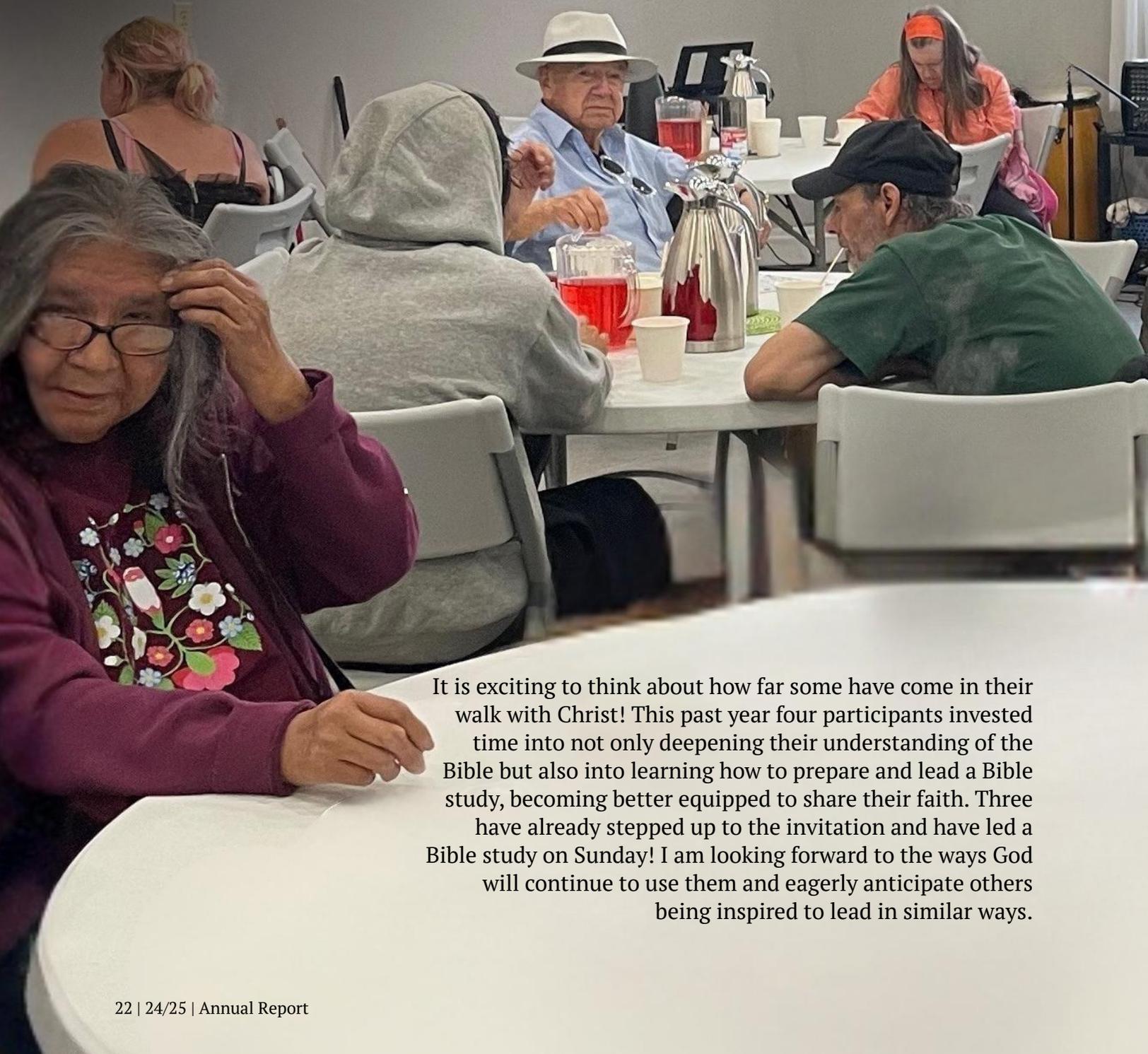
Howard Jolly—respected pastor, musician, and leader among Indigenous churches across Canada—has visited us at the Gathering, blessing us with his speaking and music.

Both ribbon skirts and shirts are powerful forms of cultural expression that help preserve and celebrate Indigenous traditions, customs, and history.



The Gathering

As I reflect on this past year at the Gathering, I am filled with a wide range of emotions. I am filled with joy and excitement as I think of the growth that I have seen as some have deepened their walk with God and have shared their faith with their community. The joy is mixed with grief as I think of those who have been a huge part of the Gathering but are no longer with us. Through it all, God is faithful and has remained steadfast. This past year over 500 people stepped through our doors, willing to hear the truth about our Creator and, at times, eager to learn more about God from his Word.



It is exciting to think about how far some have come in their walk with Christ! This past year four participants invested time into not only deepening their understanding of the Bible but also into learning how to prepare and lead a Bible study, becoming better equipped to share their faith. Three have already stepped up to the invitation and have led a Bible study on Sunday! I am looking forward to the ways God will continue to use them and eagerly anticipate others being inspired to lead in similar ways.



A small child was allowed to take hold of the drum beater and beat along with his mother's drum as she and his aunt softly sang at his cousin's funeral. His older cousin, barely over twenty, passed away only a couple months after his father. Both he and his father were a regular part of the Gathering. The father had been coming to the Gathering for many years and was a regular attendant in the Learning Centre's Bible study courses. When we acquired the counselling offices, he stayed long hours volunteering, as we painted the rooms and hallways together. That is when I first heard about the son he so clearly loved and cared for.



Last year he became a regular at the Gathering, always coming together with his father. When his father passed away and a life-threatening accident placed him in the ICU, I would stop in to see him. He would share his raw, honest music with me, which he worked on even in the hospital bed. We would spend the last minutes praying together. They are two of several of our community who have passed away this last year. ***I can't help wondering what the gathering in heaven is like right now.***

-Justin Hiebert - The Gathering Lead

Bible Studies

Mary-Ellen has very capably led a few Bible studies mid-week and at the Gathering. There is much opportunity for further leadership from Mary-Ellen.

Dr. Joyce Hancock spent many years serving as a missionary internationally, so when she returned to Thunder Bay to care for her mom, she naturally continued to serve. We were thrilled when she joined NorthWind eight years ago. During that time she started Bible studies, completed her doctor of ministry studies and became the Spiritual Growth department head. Joyce has done an incredible job training others in leading Bible studies. Joyce will be retiring in December of 2025, handing the department leadership to Justin. Please join us in thanking Joyce for her faithful service not only at NorthWind but for many faithful years serving where God has placed her.



Bella leads some mid-week Bible studies, visits and prays with people, and attends the Gathering with family members. She also joined me (Joyce) to write an article on restoring hope for a Christian magazine.



Myrna's first experience with NorthWind was when she joined a line at the door and entered into the Gathering on a Sunday early evening. She said she wanted to find out what was going on and why people were lining up to get in!

Following that evening, Myrna made the Gathering a regular part of her week. There she heard about mid week Bible studies and, at times, has joined in two studies per week. She then agreed to take training to lead Bible studies and has led a few at a mid-week group and at the Gathering. Myrna heard about Next Steps and often stops in to have some tea and bannock and chat with the staff who are there.

One day, while chatting with Jeremy, he asked her if she had ever considered baptism. She came back to me as her Bible study leader to find out more and Jeremy also called to tell me of his conversation with her. Myrna and I talked about what baptism meant and she asked for an opportunity to be baptized.

That happened in August, when several people from Grace Church, a supporter of NorthWind, were to be baptized at a service at Boulevard Lake. Justin and I baptized Myrna as part of this service. It was very meaningful, not only for Myrna and us, but also for the church people to have an extra share in NorthWind's ministry. She continues to enjoy involvement with several of NorthWind's programs. *Myrna now goes to Next Steps to share a cup of tea with new people and to have opportunity to share her love for Jesus with anyone who will listen.*

-Dr. Joyce Hancock - Spiritual Growth Department Head

Each skirt can tell a story, with the colors, materials, and number of ribbons having specific meanings unique to the wearer or their nation.

The colours of my ribbon skirt symbolize my deep connection to the earth and to God, grounding me in both creation and spirituality. Each shade woven into the fabric reflects teachings of balance, gratitude, and the sacredness of life. The ribbon skirt itself represents resilience, identity, survival, and womanhood—an enduring reminder of the strength carried by generations before me. Wearing it connects me to my culture, my community, and the stories that have shaped who I am. It honours the role of women as life-givers and caretakers of relationships. When I put it on, I feel held by those who came before me and empowered to walk with integrity for those who come after. It is more than clothing; it is a living expression of identity and belonging.

-Lauren Hartman - Counsellor



Landbased Activities & Expressive Arts



“Sometimes we can create things we can't talk about, and sometimes it gives us something to focus on beyond whatever it is that we're working through.”



I use expressive therapy in sessions because sometimes we can create what we can't yet put into words. It also gives us something to focus on beyond what we're working through. I've seen something as simple as self-care colouring make a significant impact.

I work with a client who doesn't speak very much in session. My clinical goal with her is simply to facilitate a positive counselling experience so that when she is ready to share—whether with me or someone else down the line—she knows there are people willing to sit with her and hold space. Occasionally, I ask a question about what she's drawing, and she responds with more than a nod or shake of her head.

In the Next Steps program, I spent much of my time helping people fill out applications for housing, treatment, ID, and more. In that space, allowing clients to doodle, draw, or color gives them something to do while I ask often uncomfortable questions about arrears, their children, or their engagement with substances.

My clients and I started a beautiful community art piece together. It was designed so that anyone who comes into my office can contribute. I invite people to take part, and they can choose whether or not to join in.

What's truly amazing is seeing so many of my clients—many of whom are in conflict with one another—come together to create a single, beautiful piece of art.

-Sherrie-Lee Petrie - Social Worker

Community Care





Outreach Social Housing Complexes

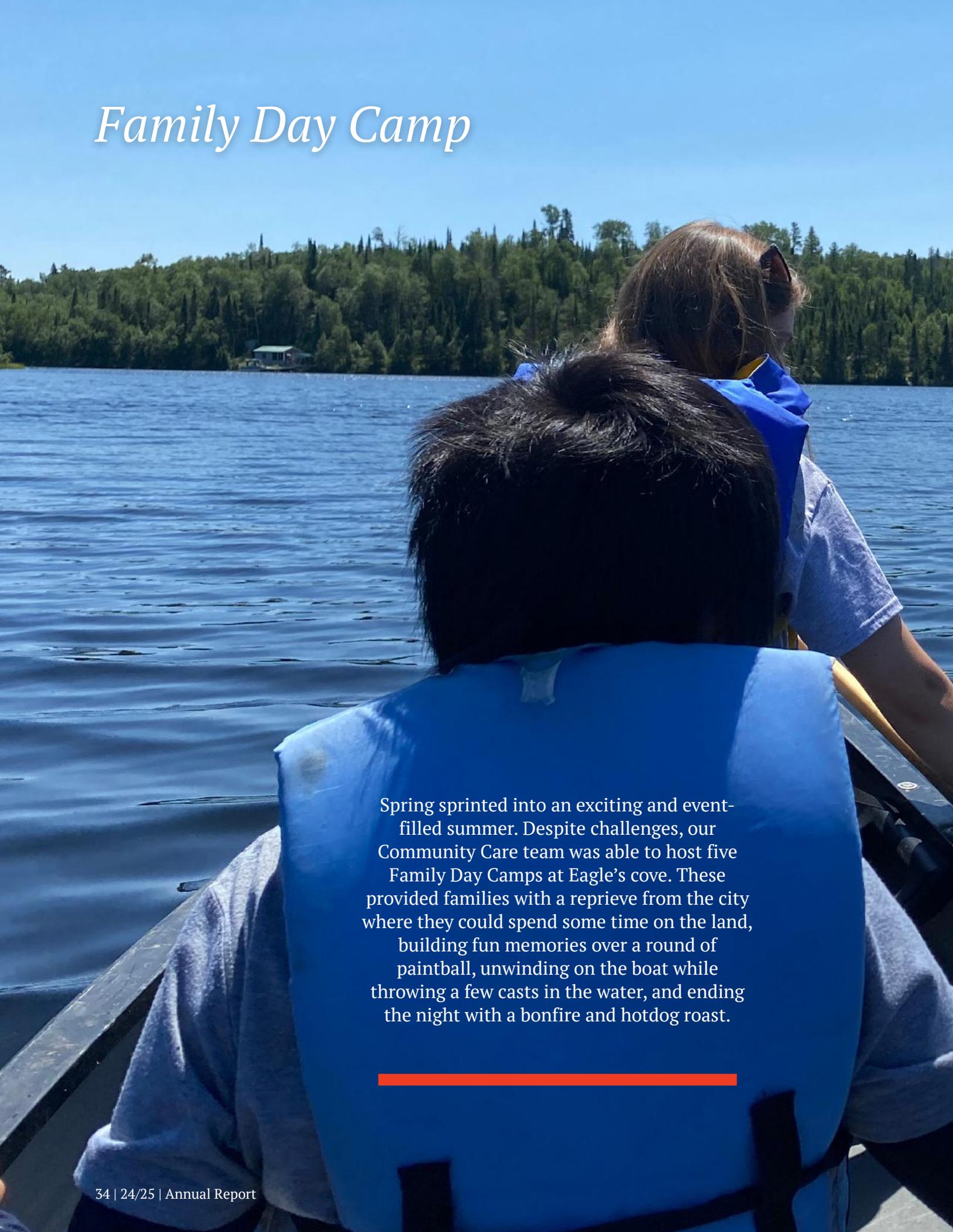
On a chilly January afternoon, I slipped off my gloves to pour a cup of hot chocolate, thankful for the bit of warmth that returned to my fingers as the warm beverage filled the paper cup. That's the last of four cups going into the small housing unit. As I passed the cup on to the lady who just stepped out of the door in a pair of slippers, she gives me a quick update on her mother's recovery. The doctors are surprised by the rapid progress. **"It's because of all the prayers!"** she states matter-of-factly, quickly stepping back inside to get out of the cold. I barely have time to assure her that we will keep praying, before the door swings closed to shelter the rapidly cooling home from the icy winter air. For a moment I pause and wonder if it's me or the family who leaves more encouraged from our visit. I am grateful for the privilege of having witnessed the defiant faith shown by this individual in the face of her mother's illness, only recently having suffered the loss of her father. The family has been a part of NorthWind's community for several years now, and I am easily reminded of the fact that I am merely stepping into a small part of a longer journey. It will only be a few months until neighbours let us know that this same family has finally moved to the new home they have been excitedly anticipating for the last year.

With the regular turnover of families in the low-income complexes, many of the relationships we form last only a season; yet, every once in a while we get a glimpse of God's work. A young man I've known for a few years recently stopped by. He just finished a four-month sentence at the correctional center, and we were his first stop after being back under the open sky. While having struggled with addiction for some time, he has been sober these past few months and is eager to get into treatment. I connected him with one of our social workers, so they could walk him through different options and help with the application process. Just before leaving, we had a good laugh together as he recounted a story about a time in his youth he had been paintballing at the Cove.

I am thankful that in his adulthood, he still knows he has a place where he will find people he can trust. I pray that God continues to give us the wisdom to know how we can support families and individuals like him along their journey of growth and healing.

-Justin Hiebert - Community Care Department Head

Family Day Camp

A photograph showing the back of a person wearing a blue life vest, sitting on a boat. They are looking out over a large body of water towards a forested shoreline under a clear blue sky. Another person is visible in the background, also on the boat.

Spring sprinted into an exciting and event-filled summer. Despite challenges, our Community Care team was able to host five Family Day Camps at Eagle's cove. These provided families with a reprieve from the city where they could spend some time on the land, building fun memories over a round of paintball, unwinding on the boat while throwing a few casts in the water, and ending the night with a bonfire and hotdog roast.



This summer, five churches sent short term volunteer missions teams to support our ministry

- **Cornerstone Christian Community Church, Markham**
- **Milliken Christian Community Church, Scarborough**
- **The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto**
- **Faith Welland Church, Welland**
- **Maple View Mennonite Church, Wellesley**



Thank you for giving of your resources, time, and gifts to help us with our summer programs!

PlayDays

Many families who signed up for the day camps were unable to make it out for various reasons, so it was good to be able to host several events and activities which were easily accessible close to their homes.

We had five amazing teams jump in and make these events possible. The first team kicked off the season by playing games with children and building excitement among families for upcoming events. Many new relationships sprouted and grew in the housing complexes during our first earth-themed Playday.





Connected with

267

Individuals
this year

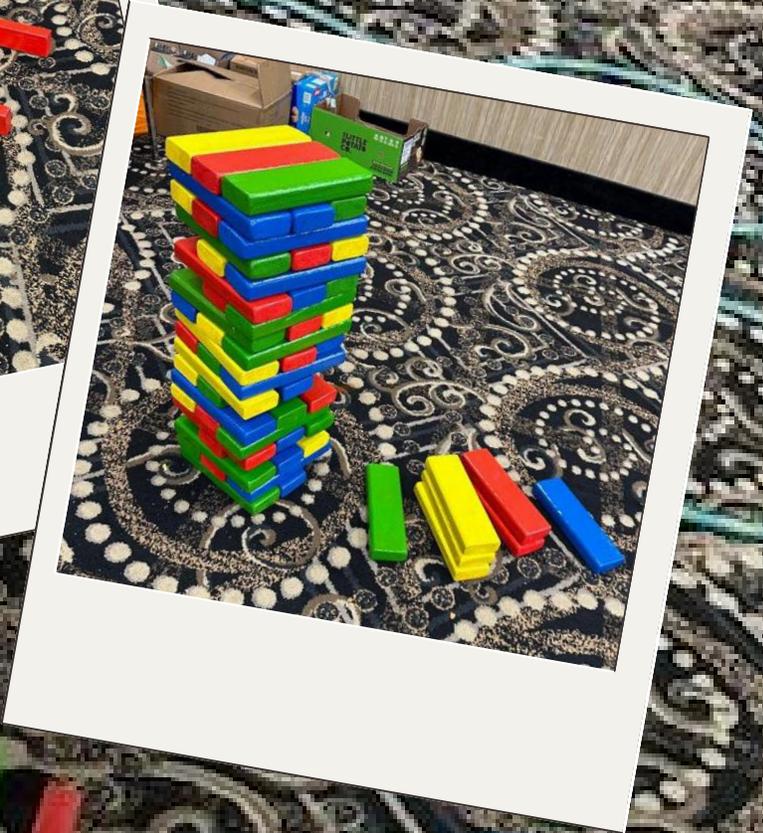
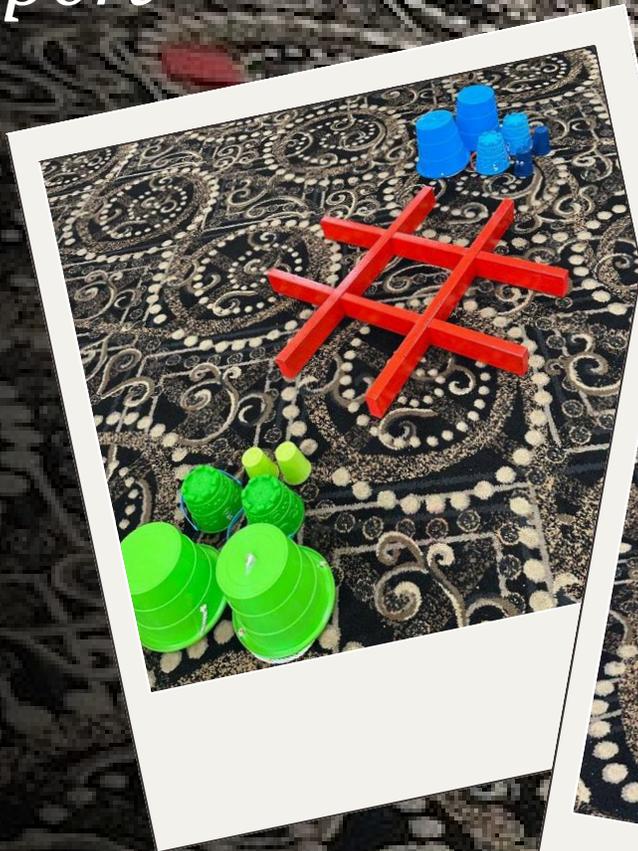


Camp in the City

After our first Playday, we were able to overcome some of the obstacles we faced in bringing families out to the Cove by bringing the Family Day Camp experience to the city. After forming cabin-themed teams, families worked together in various camp games and four-legged canoe races. We wrapped it all up with s'mores and prizes. We were grateful for good weather as summer ended as families soaked up the final Playday together over exciting water-themed games.



Crisis Support



Wildfires across the North caused an unexpected change of plans for one team enroute to Thunder Bay. They were well prepared to run a Vacation Bible School in the northern community of Pikangikum First Nation.



After a large-scale evacuation emptied the community, we had the privilege of hosting a team from Southern Ontario, who suddenly needed to create a new plan on the fly. *The team worked hard during the first part of the week, developing wonderful new games and activities.* With the support of IFNA (Independent First Nations Alliance), we were able to partner together to host events in local hotels for the families who had been evacuated..

NorthWind has responded in similar situations in the past, stepping in when northern communities have been displaced. Once again, we were grateful to provide support, connection, and encouragement during a very difficult time.

Responding to unexpected needs has become part of our summer ministry as we meet people where they are, build relationships, and offer hope in the midst of uncertainty.



Street Care

Next Steps

The doors swing wide at Next Steps. As Northwind's lowest-barrier program, Next Steps opens every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to support individuals that are unhoused and struggling through addiction. Some people come in for Bannock and coffee, and others come to just be in a safe space for a time. Other come to access social navigation and counselling supports.

Our participants have told us that what makes Next Steps special is that it's one of the only places that they feel confident that they are safe, and will be cared for well by staff. The Next Steps clinical team supports individuals with a range of issues – housing, treatment, detox, accessing legal aid, grief, anxiety, and so on.

1545

Participants
received support
this year



One of the individuals that the Next Steps clinical team supported this past year was Clayton (name altered for confidentiality). Clayton started seeing us in February 2025. Clayton struggled with childhood trauma and substance misuse, but wasn't open about that immediately. Clayton would often say "I want to make better choices, but I just am not making them". In sessions, he would dream about what change might look like in his life, but he felt like that was unattainable.

His clinician worked with Clayton, and his engagement led him to attend programs happening during Next Steps (a Bible study, as well as an AA-based group run by a partner organization). Two months in, Clayton began coming to sessions to talk about not only what the barriers were, but how he might work through them. He began talking about treatment. He continued attending the groups, and started putting requests in our Prayer Jar. We all rejoiced when Clayton got accepted to treatment. Clayton attended a 7 day detox program and has since completed treatment. ***Clayton has called Northwind a few times since treatment to thank his worker – and Northwind – for being his safe place to land.*** He shared that he is working towards reconciliation with his family.

Much like NorthWind's Theory of Change sets out, Clayton came to us because he was seeking a safe space. As Clayton's secure attachment to the clinician strengthened, so did his willingness to engage beyond just her office space. Once Clayton was able to establish that Northwind was safe, he was willing to share about his trauma. As he shared, and as Northwind staff and volunteers stood witness to his pain, he felt comfortable seeking treatment. And as he came out of treatment, he began the process of reconciling with his loved ones.

-Sherrie-Lee Petrie - Social Worker

“And I think that’s what our world is desperately in need of - lovers, people who are building deep, genuine relationships with fellow strugglers along the way, and who actually know the faces of the people behind the issues they are concerned about.”

— Shane Claiborne





Friday Night Outreach

The number of people we see on the streets for Friday Night Outreach has increased since I started participating a few years ago. Drugs have chained many lives. When we go out to meet people where they are, we pray with people and encourage them to keep living and take steps to make their lives better. We often bring sandwiches, soup, or hot dogs along with iced tea or hot chocolate.

Connected with
over
300
Individuals
this year

We are eager to see Jesus followers increase awareness and care for these most vulnerable among us. As Jesus told us in the parable of the sheep and the goats, whatever we do for them, we do for him.

-Mary Kirkpatrick - volunteer

Thank you to our Volunteers

Our volunteers are essential to the work of Next Steps, Friday Night Outreach, and The Gathering on Sunday afternoons. Their dedication, compassion, and faithful presence allow these ministries to thrive and make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. We are deeply grateful for the time, energy, and heart they give to our community.

NORTHWIND
Family Ministries



Prison Care

I pulled away from home this morning with a mix of excitement, anticipation, and weariness. Isn't that so common? Life is often a mix of emotions amid our circumstances. As I drove to pick up Katie, Christmas music played on the radio and our drive out to the Women's Correctional Center was cheerful, full of chatter about our week and the morning schedule.

We arrived early as usual, warmly welcomed by a Correctional Officer, who I later found out was the Sergeant. The recreational staff lead met us at the office, and after we signed in, we headed to the recreation dorm where we put together 60 gift bags with soap, chocolate, scriptures, bookmarks, candy, hair elastics, and individually written Christmas cards. As we worked, we prayed that the girls would feel incredibly blessed. ***We truly desired for them to know they are loved and seen by Jesus. Isn't it incredible that we get to be His hands and feet?***

It felt like it took forever to bag everything. We were so excited to hand them out. We let the Rec Lead know when we were done, and she radioed the Sergeant to confirm delivery of the gifts. I could hear the conversation over the walkie-talkies. The tone did not sound good. I began to feel like something was wrong. She came over and said the Sergeant told us to leave the gifts. They'd go through them later, and she would hand them out. I felt overwhelmed with disappointment. I was already planning how I could persuade her, especially since we had already been pre-approved for this event. "Our main purpose was to be able to hand the girls each a gift, and we were told we could." She said, "Sergeant says no, so you won't be able to." I decided not to say anything more.





I felt sad as we walked away. How will the girls know we care? How will they know we brought them gifts? How will we know if they all get one? As we approached the main dorm, Katie asked if we could go through the dorms to say Merry Christmas to the girls. After some hesitation, it was agreed that we could. As we walked into the dorms, we were greeted with the biggest smiles and were swarmed by the girls. Each of them spoke to us, knowing our names. We told them that we had special gifts that they would be getting later that day. **“Thank you, thank you, thank you,”** we heard repeatedly. I began to wonder if our gift was special enough for this response.

In B Dorm, I caught the eye of a familiar woman I hadn’t seen in a while. ***She came running over with the biggest smile and gave me a hug. I felt so honored. “I’m staying here now,” she said. “Make sure you say hi to everyone at NorthWind. I am so happy to see you.”*** I was happy to see her too. Katie and I chatted with the girls for a bit. I was still disappointed that we couldn’t give out the gifts, but we were grateful to have been able to say hi.

As we were leaving, I said, “Thank you for letting us say hi to the girls. It made up for not being able to give out the gifts.” “I thought you were going to give out the gifts today,” she said. I replied, “The Sergeant told Rec that we were not able to.” She looked puzzled. “What Sergeant? I’m the Sergeant. I thought you didn’t have time to hand out the gifts?” Almost before she could finish, I said, “We do have time. We would love to hand out the gifts.” The Sergeant apologized. “Sorry about the miscommunication. I’ll get an officer to look through the bags, and you can hand them out.”

We could not believe it! The guards let us in to hand each girl their gift. I could cry just thinking about their faces as they opened them. Women were replacing their homemade hair-elastics with the brand-new ones and smelling each others’ bars of soap.

There was a buzz, and if you closed your eyes, you would forget you were behind bars. Many times, we told the girls that we were thinking of them and praying for them. On the way out, we thanked the Sergeant for allowing us to hand out the gifts to each girl. She and the other Correctional Officers thanked us for coming. “Merry Christmas,” we said to each other.

The girls had made each of us an ornament to take home. They are beautiful, and I will always cherish mine. I chose one that said “Joy.” What a word to have been chosen amid these circumstances. Imagine being locked up and painting the word Joy on an ornament for a volunteer. Oh, how I pray that we can bring love, joy, peace, and hope through the work we do at the Correctional Center.

-Alissa Darrow - Counselling Department Head

Northern Care

Compass

While on one of our regular rotation trips into a northern community, there was an individual that we had not heard from in a while. In hearing about a situation that had taken place we decided to visit this individual at their home. When we arrived, they seemed surprised to see us and asked if we could come back the next day.

The next day this community member, with a smile on their face, shared that they told their mom, “You know what was weird, *I was having a hard time and then my counsellor was at my door.*” We did not talk much about the current situation, but the individual shared that they were glad we were able to stop by and check in on them.

While visiting another community, where NorthWind has had a partnership for many years, individuals were shocked, happy, and excited to see familiar faces of their counsellors coming to visit with them. Questions like, “Are you really standing at my door?” were often asked. It was not long before the shock was replaced with updates and conversations about what was currently happening in their lives.

Some of these connections span over many years, while others have been shorter. However, it is common for us to hear someone yell from across the street to say “hi,” stop on the road to book a session mid walk, or ask about the one person who is not on the team that trip. These are all examples of what it looks like to experience authentic genuine connection with one another. ***As these connections are established, and people experience healing, we hope that there will be a ripple effect into the lives of those around them to create positive long-term change.***

-Heather Le Quant - Family Counsellor



LifeBuild Parenting



LifeBuild Parenting began three years ago, developed in collaboration with local Elders at the request of community members wanting a welcoming space to connect and talk about parenting. In September 2024, we continued the series in one of the communities through a short adaptive parenting mini-series.

The lessons reflected the stories and values the Elders shared during the original collaboration, and *it was a precious time that reminded us how meaningful it is to share wisdom across generations.* We laughed, cried, built relationships, and ate KFC together.

In January and February, we added baking lessons to the program. Six participants joined us to make breakfast cookies, complete with a few rounds of the spoon game while they baked.

In February, we made Apple Pan-dowdy, and as the scent of cinnamon filled the air, we talked about stress and its impact on parenting. These sessions offered support, encouragement, and practical tools to strengthen families and help them thrive. It was so good to engage in community life together.

-Bonita Ledua - CEO



Facilities

Timothy Blanchard served as the Maintenance Lead at NorthWind Family Ministries last year. Before that, he spent a summer working at NorthWind through the Canada Summer Jobs program and helped out occasionally over the past few years. In August, 2025 Timothy moved to Prince George, B.C., where he is taking a foundations course for Level 1 Millwright. His time at NorthWind played an important role in shaping that decision.

Working in maintenance at NorthWind helped me gain a passion for mechanical systems and problem-solving various issues. I learned how to use basic tools, perform residential maintenance, and become more confident in working with my hands. The experience taught me to be resourceful and to think through practical solutions when something needed fixing.

Because NorthWind is a faith-focused organization, my work there always felt meaningful. ***It wasn't just about keeping things running; it was about supporting a ministry that helps people.*** That sense of purpose made a difference in how I approached each project.

One of the experiences that stands out to me was working with the summer teams. It was fun and a great opportunity to learn from others who brought different skills and expertise. I saw God's timing in how certain teams showed up with exactly the construction experience we needed. Some of the major projects we completed over the year included the office wall renovation at 138 May Street and installing the HRV unit in the 138 basement. Other upgrades that made a difference were a new back alley vent cover, and plumbing vent repairs at Eagle's Cove. These projects took extra planning and teamwork.

Getting Eagle's Cove ready for Family Camp was one of those times that reminded me how important this work is. Volunteers and community partners played a big role. Having the summer teams on site helping to get the camp ready made it possible to get a lot more done. Seeing families enjoy the space we had prepared was really rewarding. My favorite spot is the beachfront at Eagle's Cove—it's a nice place to stop and take in the view after a busy day.



If I had to describe my time at NorthWind in one word, I'd say "Impactful".

Keeping facilities operating well helps the ministry stay focused on its main goals. There is a lot that goes into maintaining NorthWind's buildings and grounds that people don't always see—the small tasks like moving furniture or patching walls that keep everything in good shape. A lot of the work happens behind the scenes, but it's what keeps programs running smoothly and spaces welcoming for guests. Facility work is often overlooked when it comes to funding, but it is essential for the whole organization to function effectively. We are so thankful for grantors and donors that contribute directly towards facilities - it makes such a difference. Additionally, the funding that made it possible to get the plow truck was definitely a blessing.

Looking ahead, there are projects still needing to be completed, including finishing repairs on the main house at Eagle's Cove, and I'd love to see a new lodge built there someday.

-Timothy Blanchard

Summer Staff

During the summer of 2025 we again had the blessings of hiring youth with the Canada Summer Jobs grants we received.

We received funding for 10 youth, including social service and outreach workers for Next Steps. These three were a big part of the Summer programming.

2625
Canada
Summer Jobs
hours

Demerai helped with the food services and cooks a mighty fine butter chicken.



Malachi and Andrew worked with the teams and ran great summer programming in the social housing complexes and at the Cove.



Finances



September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025

Fees for Service

	Counselling	\$626,180
	FSP	\$61,424
	Compass	\$193,869

Total Counselling Service Revenues	\$881,473
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General Fund Donations
\$384,383

Pro Bono Counselling
\$224,347

We are committed to providing counselling to those who cannot afford it. This is the value of sessions provided without charge in this last fiscal year.

\$96,524
Total Grants

Thank you to all of the donors and grantors who make this work possible

General Fund Expenses
\$1,476,823

General Deficit
(\$74,822)

Grantors



THANK YOU!

Donations

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P7E 1A9

*“Whether
you turn to the
right or to the left,
your ears will hear a
voice behind you saying,
‘this is the way; walk in it.’”*

Isaiah 30:21