



Annual Report

2023 - 2024

NORTHWIND

Family Ministries





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Executive Director Report

Having two birthdays can be a bit tricky. Which one do you celebrate? Do you let one slip and focus on the second? Do you celebrate both. This has been the challenge with NorthWind.

August of 2024 marked ten years since we took a thick sharpie and wrote “NorthWind Family Ministries” across the front of 32 t-shirts. It had been only a few weeks earlier when we packed up and moved into the city of Thunder Bay.

Two teams arrived August 16th, 2014 and helped us move into our home and run playdays. That week we again went to the social housing complexes as we had every summer over the past six years under a different organization. This time though we served under a new name and logo.



NorthWind's fiery red logo has multiple references to the Holy Spirit, recognizing we cannot do this work without God's leading.



The dove reminds us of when Jesus was baptized and the Spirit appeared as a dove, affirming his identity. The flame-like image references the tongues of fire that rested on the disciples at Pentecost, affirming God would dwell within them. The word Wind is also a reference to that moment when the disciples were empowered to fulfill the great commission. Our hearts have always been for the northern, often remote, communities and so North in the name acknowledges our desire and prayer that God's Spirit would continue to move mightily in the north, bringing healing and hope.

For the following two years, we engaged in the work of establishing a charity. Thanks to the work of Wes and Sue Carlisle who helped with setting up systems, a group of individuals who became the first board, a collection of donors across Canada who gave sacrificially, and a local church that invited us to operate under them while we got the foundational pieces in place, we were able to return to ministry within weeks of such a significant change. Which leads to NorthWind's second birthday. In July 2016 we began operations as a non-profit corporation and a Canadian registered charity.

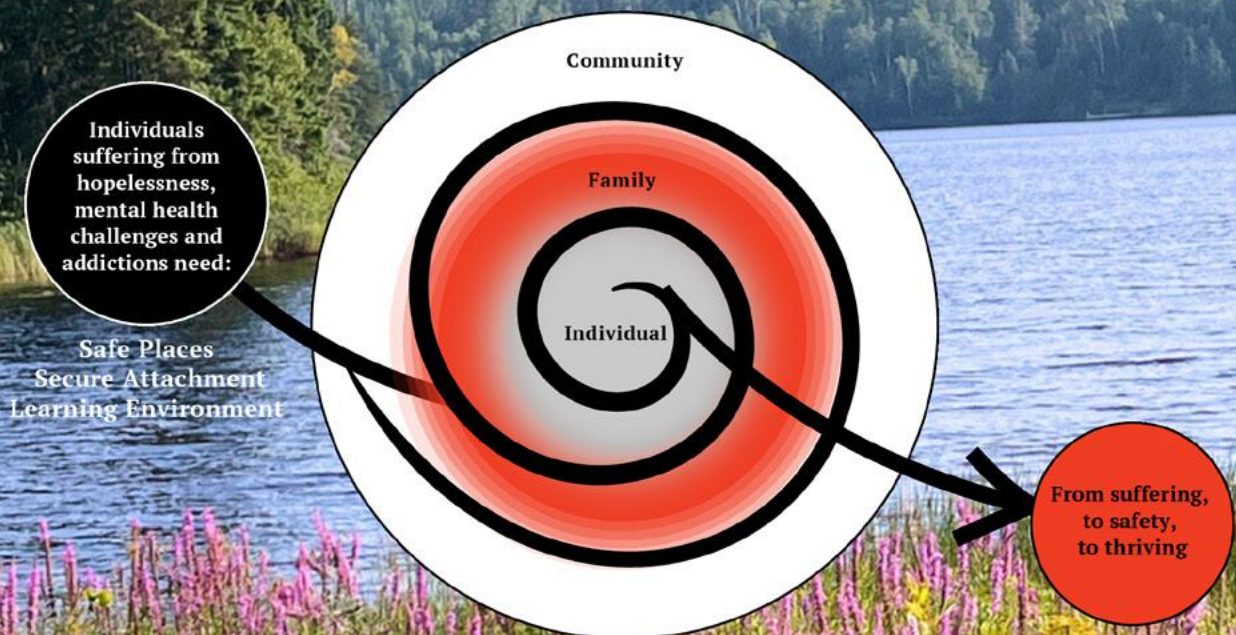
So, as we celebrate ten years of ministry and still look forward to our tenth anniversary in two years, we acknowledge we could not have done this alone. NorthWind has grown a lot. With 37 staff serving over 2500 people annually, we are amazed at what God is doing. Thank you for being a part of this incredible work in Thunder Bay and the northern region of Ontario.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bonita Ledua'.

*Bonita Ledua, RP, MA(MAFT)
Executive Director*

Theory of Change

This past year included a significant amount of work on answering the question of “*Why*”. *Why do we do what we do?* We have always known that God called us into this work but there are specific reasons why we engage the way we do, why we hold to certain values, and how our theology is acted out. These questions led us to our *Theory of Change*. We are excited to share with you this important foundational piece to which we believe God has called us.



Sacred Places of Hope

Safe places allow our guarded self to disengage our fight, flight and freeze posture. It is then that we are able to participate in a genuine relationship with another.

As we experience knowing and being known by another, being cared for and offering care, we heal from past trauma; we see our uniqueness and are able to grow in competency.

In the absence of fear and the presence of love, healthy boundaries, and an acknowledgement of our unique worth and dignity, our learning brain emerges. We, then, have capacity for increased self-awareness, embracing our identity, seeing new choices, and to further grow.

Families have the potential to provide that safe place as they heal together.

Families heal, individuals grow, and communities thrive.

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.

Strategy Map

END STATEMENT	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.			
"PRODUCT" We are committed to providing...	COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMING Engagement with Indigenous leadership Participant involved planning		ATTENTIVE STAFF being present, responsive, caring, and curious	
PROCESSES We are engaged in...	REDEMPTIVE SOLUTIONS From Suffering to Safety to Thriving	ATTACHMENT-BASED THERAPY MODELS Providing ways for people to connect to family/community	CENTRE-SET DISCIPLESHIP Jesus is at the centre; Our journeys may look different	LIFE-LONG LEARNING ENVIRONMENT Cultural safety; self awareness; commitment to learning
PEOPLE We have a robust team that God has called to serve others	TEAM LEADERSHIP Lead Team Department Heads Program Leads	MENTAL HEALTH TEAM Professional, trauma trained Team	THEOLOGICALLY TRAINED Trauma trained discipler-makers	SUPPORT TEAM Facilities, Administration, Land-based
FINANCIAL We see God providing in these ways...	DONATIONS Build lasting connections with churches, individuals and businesses		GRANTS Identify foundations with like-minded impact desires, goals, principles	FEES FOR SERVICE Diversify fees for service

Board Chair Report



1 Corinthians 12 uses an analogy of the human body with the Body of Christ (the Church). Just like the human body has multiple parts and functions, so too the Body of Christ has multiple and various roles within it.

I use the verses in 1 Corinthians 12 to describe the multiple and various roles within NorthWind Family Ministries. My role with NorthWind began as a board member in 2016. It was a time of rebuilding, which meant laying down foundational ideas and practices that followed government legislation regarding non-profit organizations and, more importantly, reflecting the character and teachings of Christ.

Northwind continues to be blessed with many volunteers and employees who contribute to what Northwind has become today. We are grateful for every person's gifting, that is, those who served meals, spent time with children at Eagle's Cove, cleaned up after an event, led a Bible study, worked in finance, and so many more tasks. Each and every contribution helped Northwind meet the needs of those who came for the services that Northwind offers.

My role as a board member, and eventually a Board Chair, was to ensure NorthWind was meeting its Mission and Vision statements; that we were meeting the requirements of a non-profit organization; that we were supporting the Executive Director in her role by providing counsel, and that we remained accountable to NorthWind's corporate members.

Each board member brought their particular knowledge and experience into the discussions, and we wanted to represent the teachings of scripture and the character of Christ in the decisions we made.

NorthWind's Board of Directors

Chair:
Dr. Raymond Neckoway

Vice:
John Condon

Treasurer:
Peggy Blekkenhorst

Secretary:
John Condon

Members:
Harvey Yesno
Milissa Ewing
John Andres
Denise Sweetman

We are so thankful to the board of directors that served for the 2023-2024 fiscal/planning year.

The Apostle Paul says, "Now, you are the Body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" 1 Corinthians 12:27. All of us that are involved with NorthWind do our part and recognize others who are doing their part, resulting in a blessing to those who access NorthWind's programs. I marvel at what God has done through all of us and thank Him for the role and contribution I had in NorthWind. God Bless each of you.

***Raymond Neckoway
NorthWind Board Chair***

A photograph of a young child standing in a shallow lake, wearing an orange life preserver and colorful swim trunks. The child is looking down at something in the water. In the background, there are tall evergreen trees under a clear blue sky. Overlaid on the left side of the image is a large graphic consisting of three concentric circles: an outer orange ring, a middle dark gray ring, and an inner white circle. Text is placed within these rings.

Northern Care

Street Care

**Community
Care**

We design programs for each demographic

NorthWind Strategic Anchors



Mental Health



LifeBuild



Spiritual Growth



Land-Based Expressive

Community Care

(homed but in poverty or struggling)

Street Care

(street adjacent)


Northern Care

(northern communities)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychotherapy • Family Strengthening Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk in Counselling • Social Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychotherapy • Crisis Counselling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting • Women Restored • Cooking For Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready Now Recovery • Women Restored • Cooking For Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting • Youth Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gathering • Bible Studies • Training Bible Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapel • Street Outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent Caring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Day Camps • Children's Camps • PlayDays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressive Arts Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance • Choose Life • Youth Retreats

Community Care





***“They are like trees
planted along the
riverbank, bearing fruit
each season. Their leaves
never wither, and they
prosper in all they do.”***

Psalm 1:3 NLT

This is the promise to all those who are rooted in the Creator’s ways. Psalm 1:1-3 was the Community Care department’s theme passage for the summer, as well as our prayer for all the families and individuals in the communities we visit. The storms and challenges of everyday life living in Thunder Bay’s low-income complexes press on daily. However, just as a firmly rooted tree is resilient against the storm, and a healthy cluster of trees can break the wind, we believe that families supporting each other, rooted in the Creator’s Word, can withstand the storm.

Social Housing Outreach

Playdays

With the help of two fantastic teams travelling to Thunder Bay, NorthWind was able to host twelve separate PlayDays events this summer at the four complexes we visit weekly. Families engaged in the day's events including carnival style games, hot dogs, snow cones and iced coffees, as well as simply spending time together. We wrapped it all up with a story-time. These events created a safe environment for the community to meet together. They also gave us the opportunity to form new relationships with families and individuals. Many individuals who came out to these events were able to gain more information about other resources and programs offered at NorthWind.

*submitted by Justin Hiebert
Community Care Department Head*





Family Events

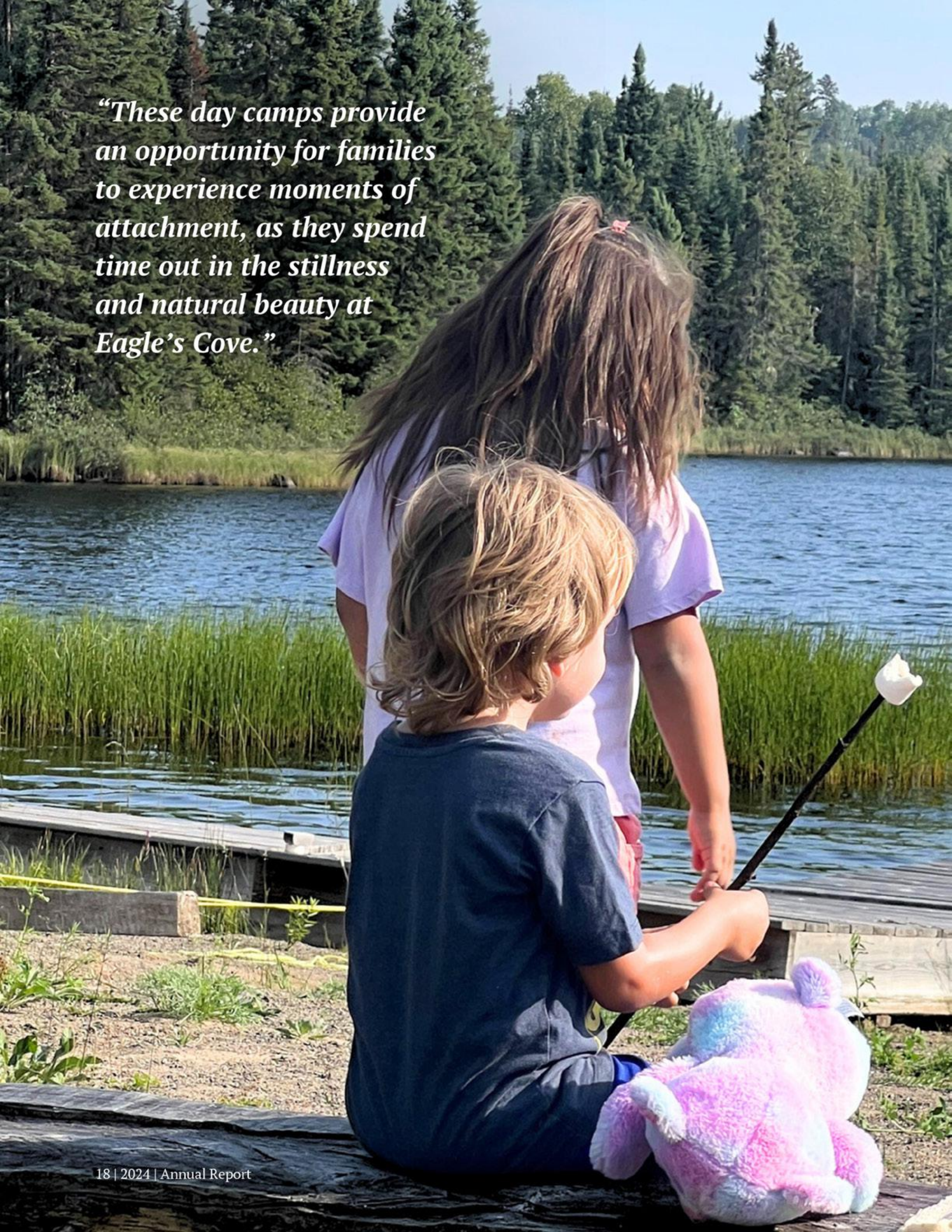




This spring and summer we hosted three different Family Events. At two of the events, held at one of our May Street locations, families enjoyed lunch and an activity such as potting flowers to celebrate spring or snapping family portraits which they placed in a hand-painted frame. The event in June was an outdoor activity at Eagle's Cove. Our team continues to visit these complexes weekly, and we will host family events at the end of each month. Our prayer is that, as we continue to meet, this community of families will be a safe place to grow together, learning about our Creator, and supporting each other amid life's challenges.

*submitted by Justin Hiebert
Community Care Department Head*

“These day camps provide an opportunity for families to experience moments of attachment, as they spend time out in the stillness and natural beauty at Eagle’s Cove.”



A scenic view of a lake with a dense forest in the background and a wooden dock in the foreground. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. A small red object is visible on the dock.

Family Day Camps

We hosted eight different Family Day Camps this summer. These day camps provide an opportunity for families to experience moments of attachment, as they spend time out in the stillness and natural beauty at Eagle's Cove. Each event looked different, as families could decide which activities in which they wanted to participate. Away from the stresses and distractions of everyday life, families could unwind, whether in a canoe on the lake, out on the paintball field, or around the fire enjoying bannock freshly fried over the coals.

*submitted by Justin Hiebert
Community Care Department Head*

Street Care



Next Steps

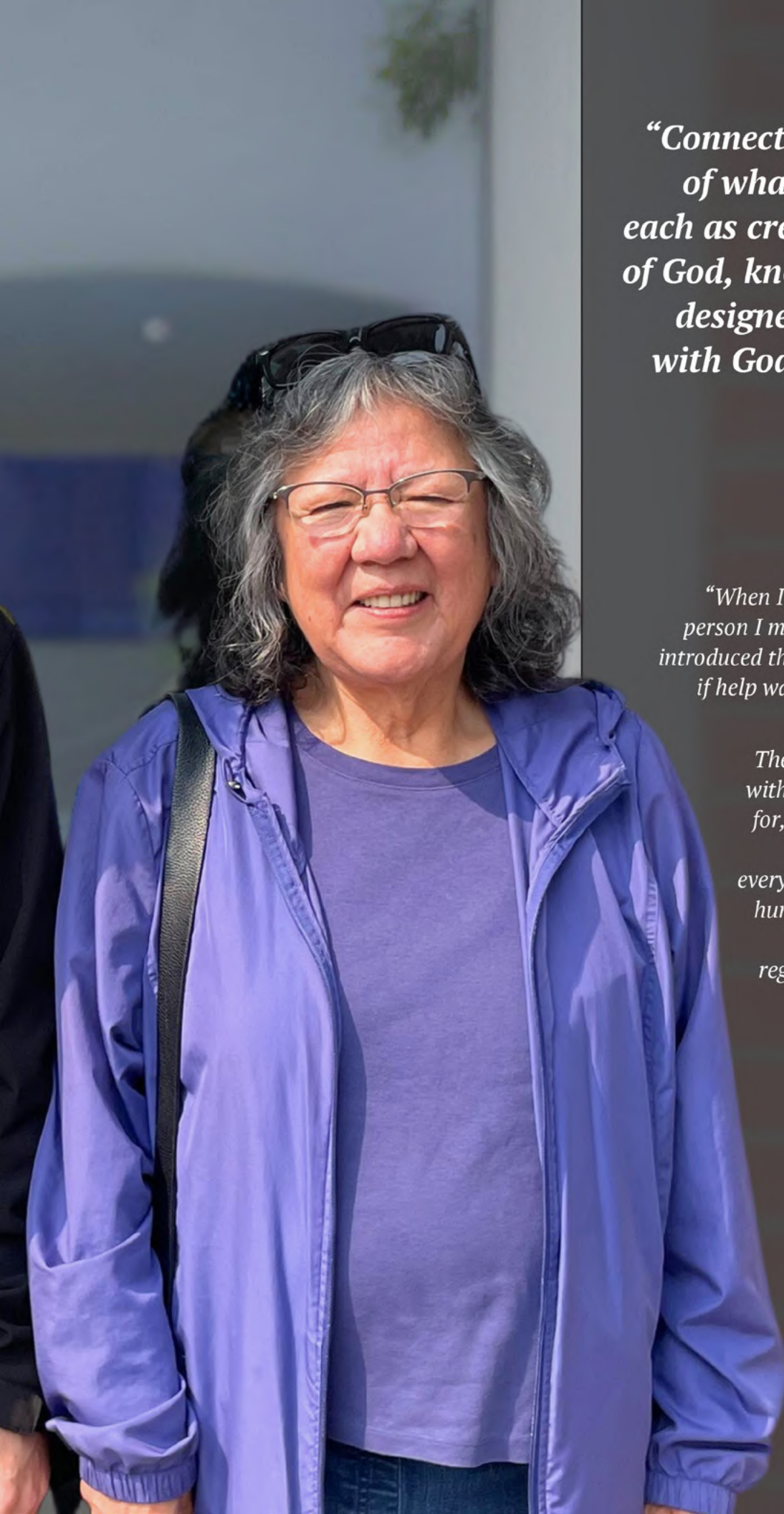
At Next Steps, our aim is to intentionally connect with and assist people to make progress toward their goals, emphasizing personal autonomy and strengthened connection with God, family and community. We open our doors to the public Tuesday to Thursday from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM, offering coffee, tea, juice and Bannock.

We love people and we love being part of people's lives. On Thursdays, we offer a "story hour" with live music where different speakers share stories of overcoming difficulty through the power of Christ. As our lowest barrier program (which means that people are welcome even while using substances such as drugs or alcohol), Next Steps provides a platform for connection to other programs at NorthWind. It initiates trust and connection.

Often, we see participants of Next Steps engaging with Northwind's addiction recovery group, Bible studies, our Sunday afternoon Gathering and Cooking for Life. Connection is at the heart of what we do. We value each as created in the image of God, knowing that we are designed for relationship with God and each other.

*submitted by Jeremy Darrow
Street Care Department Head*





“Connection is at the heart of what we do. We value each as created in the image of God, knowing that we are designed for relationship with God and each other.”

“When I came to Next Steps, the first person I met was Truman. The workers introduced themselves and were available if help was needed. Most needed to be heard in their pain.

The message of God was shared with them, and they were prayed for, if they wanted. This was the first place I’ve been where everyone was treated as a regular human being. All were accepted and treated with respect regardless of the condition they arrived in.

I continue to return there. The more I am there, the more I sense Jesus’s presence as that is how Jesus would be with these people. Jesus spent time with poor, down-cast, people. He did not look down at them, but met them at their level.”

*Elizabeth Achneepineskum
Participant*



Statistics

September 2023 -August 2024

1728 - bus tickets or rides were provided

390 - loaves of bannock were given out

2478 - times supplies were given out (water bottles, clothing, toothpaste, tooth brush, feminine hygiene, Bibles etc)

Walk-in Social Work and Counselling

Our Next Step team is made up of social workers, experienced staff, and volunteers who serve and connect. We build relationships by listening to expressed needs and offer help. Different needs arise, such as getting into detox, obtaining warm clothing, completing applications for identification, help in finding housing, making medical appointments and many more. Stories are shared where advocacy is essential to obtain further help. Our social workers and social service workers strive to assist through providing practical and emotional support with drop-in counselling/support sessions. Our team hears the needs and seeks to support the participants to reach their goals. Our desire is to come along side, so we attend appointments, do jail and hospital visits and participate in whatever capacity we can to facilitate their next steps.

1405 people, 12,369 visits

2659 - intentional personal conversations

389 - "Story Hour" attendees

859 - times prayer and spiritual support was given

660 - referrals to other NorthWind programs such as:

- Ready Now Recovery
- The Gathering
- Walking Along the Creators Path
- Cooking For Life



211 - visits to the jail, hospital or another organization with or on behalf of the participant

124 - times staff worked on treatment plans with participants

133 - trips/calls to detox

224 - times people received medical help

1467 - times people were connected to external resources such as another organization, doctor, etc.

143 - times our team facilitated or made connection for our participants to Legal Contact

182 - clothing referrals to Community Clothing Assistance

173 - times people received financial management help

290 - connections to family

223 - times staff worked on housing needs

90 - times people were assisted in finding employment

202 - times people received help to obtain ID

Friday Night Outreach

*“Our common cause is
our love for those
outside and our hope
found in Jesus.”*

On Friday nights, a faithful team of staff and volunteers meet at 138 May St South. We gather to share a devotional and pray together, asking for God’s reviving and empowering work among ourselves and on the streets of Thunder Bay. We represent many different walks of life, but our common cause is our love for those outside and our hope found in Jesus.

After our time of sharing, we prepare hot chocolate or juice and head out to meet our friends. We are well known. We regularly see the same people, sometimes we are affectionately called the wagon people or the Jesus people. Many conversations are had. We spread the word about Next Steps and the other work that NorthWind does. Many invitations to a local church are also given out.

“We walk past James. His face is sad, his expression is confused and his eyes bespeak suffering. We draw near and offer him a juice. In agony he explains the thoughts that bring him so much concern. Thoughts of other’s suffering. Whether real or imagined I cannot tell. What I can tell is the agony he is feeling. James is open to prayer, so I lay my hand on his shoulder. This moment is made significant by its very simplicity. It’s divine. Two of us, one praying and one being prayed for without an answer for the situation. Both of us need Christ. Both of us are dependent upon God. After we finish, James looks up with a smile and tells us, “A weight has been lifted off my shoulders tonight.”

Such is the simple yet profound work of Friday Night Outreach.”

*submitted by Jeremy Darrow
Street Care Department Head*



Northern Care



Enhance

This year we were privileged to have twenty-four Enhance events. These included four off-site events, including three retreats at Eagle's Cove. Students played volleyball, explored the land and the lake, and enjoyed the warmth of a campfire together. In Thunder Bay, we worked with our partners at Eabametoong First Nation Education Authority (EFNEA) to offer after-school programming at our NorthWind building as well as at the EFNEA office. Students were able to engage with LifeBuild sessions on a variety of significant topics, such as healthy boundaries and connection. Additionally, students were able to participate in activities, such as beading, led by guest instructors.



Eabametoong First Nation Education Authority has been consistently supportive of the Enhance program, and especially its LifeBuild component. EFNEA requested that we offer a 3-week series of LifeBuild Enhance for the youth at their facility, which is more accessible for the students. As a result, students attended who had not attended consistently before.

We are thankful to The Alliance Canada and The Charis Foundation who financial support our emerging Thriving Indigenous Youth ecosystem, which Enhance is a part of. This year we began to see its potential take shape. In January the Eabametoong First Nation's school was destroyed by fire, resulting in students being required to come to Thunder Bay. We invited them to NorthWind programs as well as other services and organizations for additional support.

Joshua Heath
Northern Care Department Head

Enhance

2022/23

**55 separate
individuals
attended**

2023/24

**37 separate
individuals
attended**

Compass



This past spring marked our third full year of travelling to one of the remote communities to provide mental health support. In the past year, our team made nine trips there, totaling almost fifty days. Our counsellors provided 269 counselling sessions. Our youth and recreation staff partnered with local programs to offer events and activities with a total attendance of 458.

During one of these trips our team was available to provide extra mental health support to the community in response to a devastating fire. In the aftermath, we have been privileged to be invited into their recovery process. Throughout the year, we have experienced incredible encouragement from the community leadership and members as we journey with them.

The Compass Team also supported other northern Indigenous communities. On five different occasions, smaller teams travelled to other communities to provide crisis mental health support.

Joshua Heath
Northern Care Department Head

Compass

2022/23

7 total
trips

2023/24

9 total
trips

Strategic Anchor: Counselling



It is a blessing to work alongside this incredible team of individuals that are a part of the counselling department. Administration and intake staff, social service workers (SSW), registered social workers (RSW), counsellors, registered psychotherapists (RP), and marriage and family therapists (MAFT) provided care to over 450 clients.



Natasha
Vanderkruk
(RSW)

Kelsey Hall
(Student)

Jubin Abraham
(RMSW)

Alissa Freeman
(Counselling
Office Manager)

Julie McKenna
(RP)

Florence Tan
(RP Qualifying)

Corianna Ranta
(Admin)

Alissa Darrow
(Counsellor)

Hannah Chun
(RP Qualifying)

From the moment an individual calls or walks in the door, someone is there to greet them and help them receive the mental health supports they need. The administration team changed significantly in 2023-24. Alissa Freeman replaced Alissa Darrow, who continues her training as a therapist. It has been a joy to see staff developing, engaging in post-secondary education and stepping into new roles. Heather, who started as the support staff for the Family Strengthening Program, is now the program lead and primary therapist, overseeing a team of support staff. Kyla and Cori, who both started with NorthWind in the Cooking for Life program, will be completing requirements in their respective fields as a registered psychotherapist and social service worker. There are others serving in various areas that are also pursuing graduate studies with the anticipation of joining or changing roles on the mental health team.

It is always an honour to engage with people on their healing journey. Please continue to pray for wisdom and discernment in this transformational work.

*submitted by Bonita Ledua
Counselling Department Head*



Sherrie Lee Peitrie
(RSW)

Francisca
Keelson
(Admin)

Kyla Tempelman
(RP Qualifying)

Torika Ledua
(RSW)

Anisha Alexander
(Admin)

Heather Le Quant
(RP Qualifying,
MAFT)

Bonita Ledua
(RP, MAFT,
Executive Director)

Jackie Chamness
(RP)

Lauren Hartman
(SSW)

Family Strengthening Program

The Family Strengthening program combines attachment theory in both therapy (for the family, couple, parent/child dyad and individual) and in play.

In the past year we have had a total of eighteen families come through the Family Strengthening Program (FSP). There was a total of four hundred sessions under the specific counselling program designed to improve attachment within a family. On average, FSP runs weekly for two days. This resulted in 76 days of FSP, which is double from the previous year. Families ranged from four people to eleven and visited on average three times. This growth is the result of having permanent support staff, and a counsellor whose primary focus is family therapy.


Family Strengthening Program

2022/23

35 FSP Days
10 Families

2023/24

76 FSP Days
18 Families



*"I am not
sure if you
have noticed
but my family
is laughing
again".*

There are two stories that come to mind as I reflect on the year. The first story is of a family with young children. The parents of this family shared with me that when they get home from their days at FSP they will mark on the calendar their next appointments and they will do a countdown until they come back. The parents shared that they love that their children feel comfortable and safe here while the parents are in their individual sessions.

The second story is of an older family where most of the children are youth. The dad thanked me and the FSP support staff for how we have cared for his family. The dad reflected "I am not sure if you have noticed but my family is laughing again". When I shared that I had noticed a lot more laughter than when they started coming, he smiled and said "they are not just laughing here they are laughing at home too! And

I really believe it is because of us coming to family counselling together." This brought tears to my eyes because of my heart for this program and also that this family is experiencing healing, and in the midst of painful stories and ongoing events this family has found their laughter again.

*submitted by Heather Le Quant
FSP Program Lead*

Strategic Anchor: **LifeBuild**

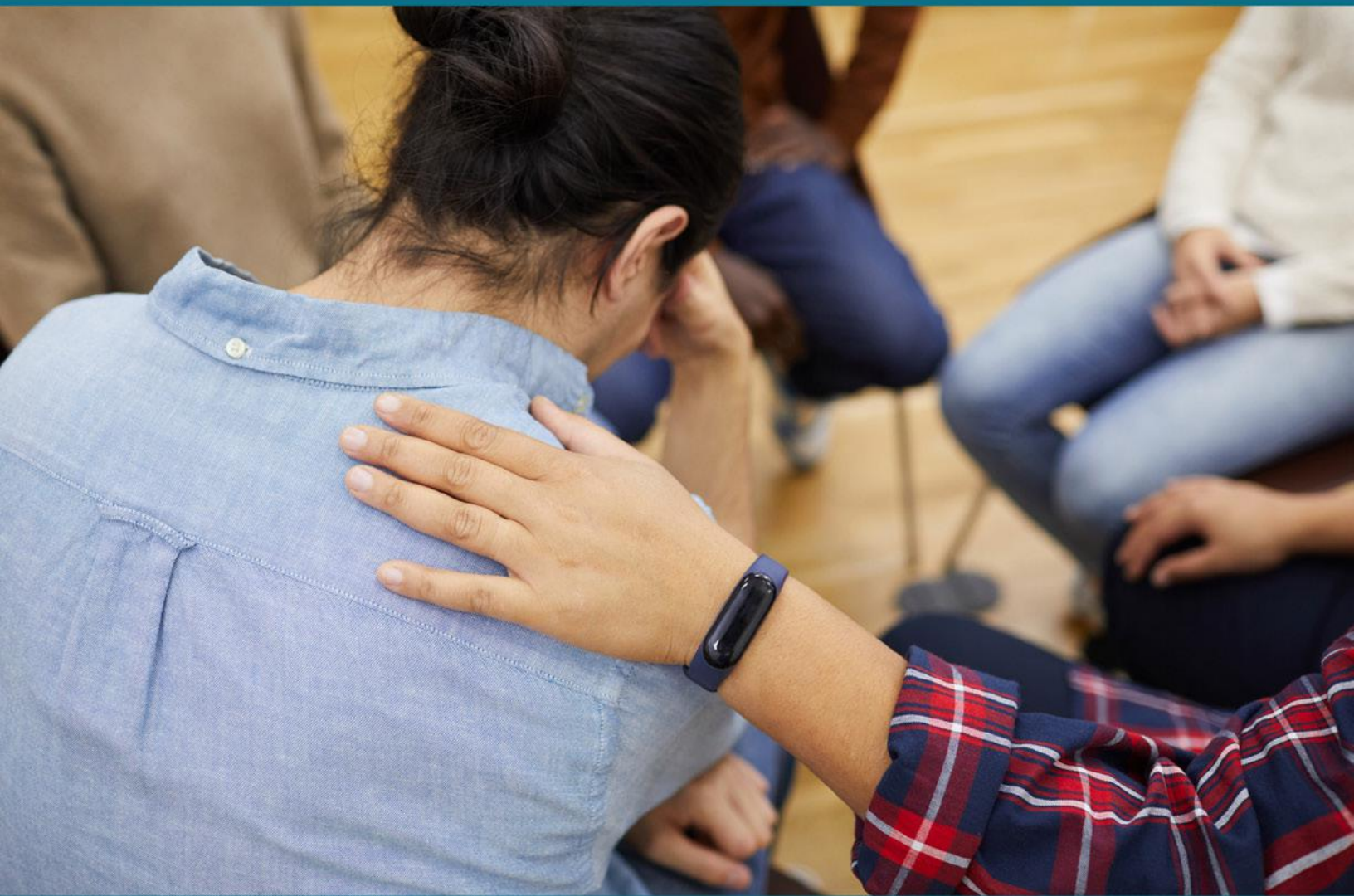


NorthWind's LifeBuild is a program that focuses on life development and skills training. Over this past year, many lives have been supported through LifeBuild programming, and I look forward to seeing continued growth and development.

LifeBuild Youth

It is always great to work with the young people that attend NorthWind's Enhance program. The youth chose the LifeBuild topics which included discovering identity, boundaries, safety within the city, being away from home, and advocacy and assertiveness training. Along with the sessions, the activities are always popular, especially painting, diamond art and building birdhouses.

*submitted by Alissa Darrow
LifeBuild Department Head*



Ready Now Recovery

Ready Now Recovery started in May in partnership with Teen Challenge. Having a LifeBuild series focused on addictions recovery has been a goal of NorthWind for a couple of years, so it was exciting when we were able to partner with Teen Challenge to make this a reality. This program is a wonderful parallel to the Next Steps program and connects with a number of the participants that access support through different programs at NorthWind.

“Katie and I run Ready Now Recovery groups on Wednesdays. The material does an incredible job integrating scripture, mental health, struggle, recovery and hope. Wednesday is certainly one of the highlights of my week as we run this group with Next Steps participants in the morning and head over to the women’s correctional center to run it in the afternoon. Each week I am blessed by our participants as we come together to learn, encourage and support one another. I am always amazed at the willingness of people to be vulnerable and participate in a group to better their lives.”

*submitted by Alissa Darrow
LifeBuild Department Head*





LifeBuild Parenting

This program has been developed in collaboration with the leadership and members of Eabametoong First Nation.

The community expressed a desire to have a resource for those who want to improve their parenting skills for a positive and lasting impact and they invited us to partner with them.

LifeBuild Parenting runs weekly in Thunder Bay for moms and dads waiting to deliver their babies. Training takes place as well in Eabametoong First Nation each month when the Compass team travels into the community.

*submitted by Alissa Darrow
LifeBuild Department Head*

Cooking for Life

“I loved volunteering with the Cooking for Life program! For various reasons, many people eat more junk food than they want to. Cooking for Life is a great way to empower participants to eat healthy. Participants would leave with one good meal and increased knowledge of how to cook various foods, which can make it easier to cook at home. Numerous people dropped by once or twice, but we had a handful of regulars who came for the fellowship and the food. It’s easier to make good food when you have friends to hang out with! We made lots of healthy soups, meatballs, chicken wraps, and pasta salad. Some participants got excited about trying new seasonings; others were often worried it was going to be too spicy for them. We always ensured flavorful meals with optional spice. Everyone made their own dish with the available ingredients, so each was unique. One participant wasn’t big on meat. The day we planned sloppy joes, he said he’d make it without meat. The other leader and I looked at each other for a minute, then found a can of lentils in the cabinet and he made a successful meal!”

*submitted by Mary Kirkpatrick
NorthWind Volunteer*






***“It’s easier to
make good
food when
you have
friends to
hang out
with!”***

Strategic Anchor: **Spiritual Growth**



I See You Jesus

A man came into my program and for a while it was just him and I. He shared how God had brought him to NorthWind through a Bible left on his front step.



He has had a difficult life. He lost two sons and his wife. He has struggled with addiction but has recently been staying sober. He came to NorthWind because he wanted to read scripture in his first language, Ojibway. I gave him an Ojibway Bible and he thanked me several times for it. God was drawing him to Himself. As he continued to share, another man joined us. This man was struggling, more than I had ever seen, but was happy to join in our conversation. I asked the first man if he would be willing to read Psalm 23 in Ojibway. We found it together and he began to read. As he read, he was translating the words, and I was listening to his incredible ability to teach. I looked over at the other man and he was completely calm, loving what was being shared and taught. I asked him if he spoke Ojibway. “Yes!” he said as his face lit up.

“I haven’t heard my language since I was a little boy,”

he exclaimed. I asked the first man if he would be willing to say something to the second man in Ojibway.

“I am so happy you join this group each week, thank you for coming!”

*I sat back and watched this special encounter. The second man’s eyes teared up and he nodded in appreciation, “**Miigwech**”, he said to the man and looked over at me and said, “**Miigwech**”. I looked around the room wondering if anyone could see or was experiencing Jesus in the same way that I was in that moment.*

*submitted by Alissa Darrow
LifeBuild Department Head*

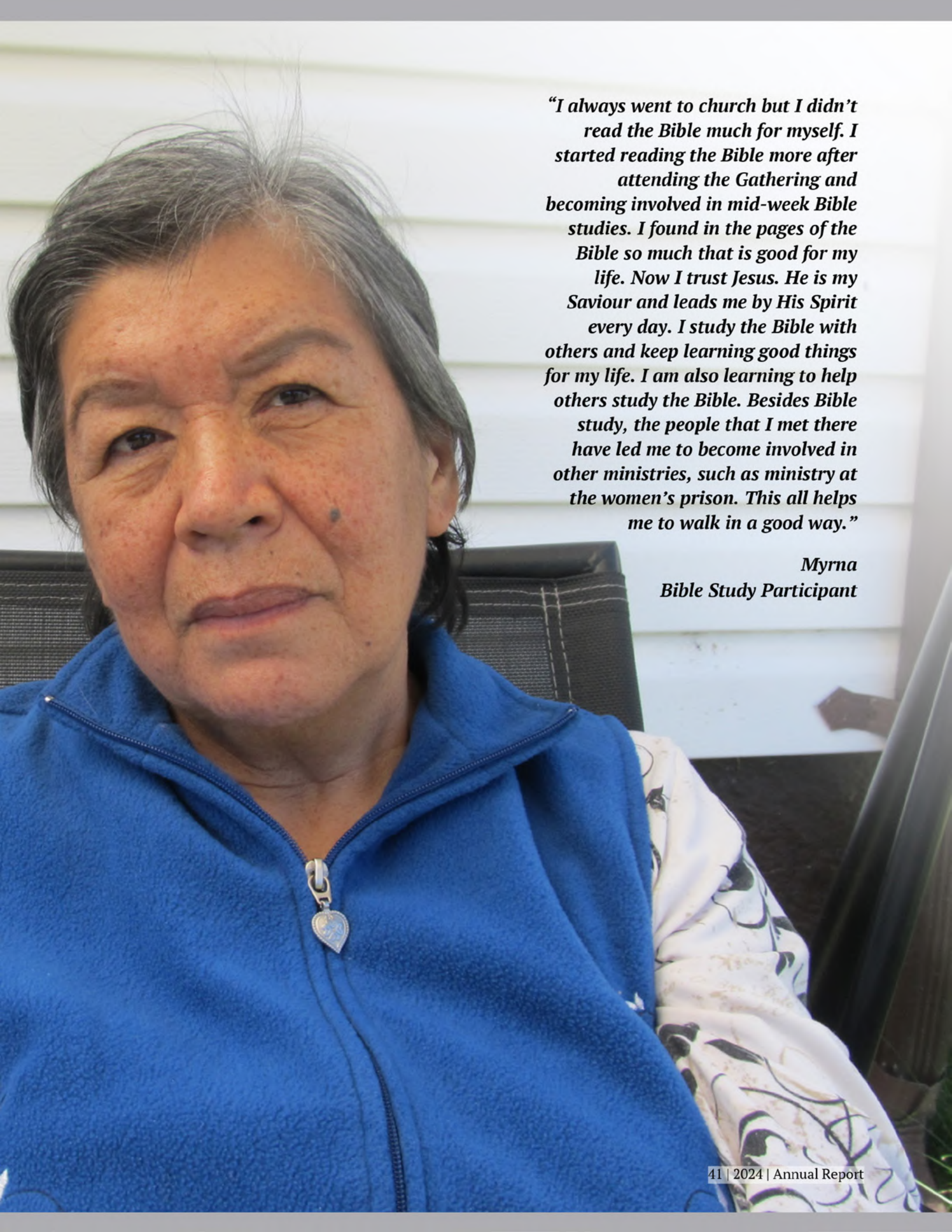
Bible Studies

Whether the activity is a Bible study, discussion, or a one-on-one conversation, the content is Bible-based and application-oriented. Bible studies and discussions are offered four times per week, at varying times. 36 people have come this year for mid-week Bible study and discussion and between 20 and 30 people routinely attend the study offered at the Gathering. These groups are comprised of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members.

Several Bible study group members have been training and now are practicing to lead Bible studies. Practice will continue for some time as members take part in the Friday group leadership and eventually will lead studies themselves. These are intimidating experiences for them, but they want to continue to grow spiritually and to serve the Lord in this way.

Spiritual growth and maturity are evidenced by how group members care for each other and apply what they learn in their own lives. Participants also encourage one another, recognizing signs of spiritual growth, praying over difficult situations, and standing with each other in need. We can see life changes, increasing spiritual priorities, and the joy of the Lord in each other.

*submitted by Dr. Joyce Hancock
Spiritual Growth Department Head*



“I always went to church but I didn’t read the Bible much for myself. I started reading the Bible more after attending the Gathering and becoming involved in mid-week Bible studies. I found in the pages of the Bible so much that is good for my life. Now I trust Jesus. He is my Saviour and leads me by His Spirit every day. I study the Bible with others and keep learning good things for my life. I am also learning to help others study the Bible. Besides Bible study, the people that I met there have led me to become involved in other ministries, such as ministry at the women’s prison. This all helps me to walk in a good way.”

Myrna
Bible Study Participant

The Gathering

“I’m excited!”

one participant told me over the phone last Sunday. I asked her why and she replied, “Because I get to come to church tonight!” To some the Gathering is exactly that. It is their community of people learning about the Creator and trying to follow the path Jesus taught us to walk on. It has been an encouragement to see many individuals coming week after week, bringing children and grandchildren, engaging in the table talks and choosing to stay for a longer Bible study.





For some, the Gathering is a place to simply be with others. I asked this week if anyone would be willing to share what the Gathering meant to them. One grieving father said, “Today is my son’s birthday. That’s why I came here tonight.”

One lady explained, “I like the stories and listening to the Bible study. I hope to be able to keep coming here until I leave town.” Over the past year we have had 764 separate individuals attend the Gathering.

Some we won’t see for a season and others we may never see again, but our prayer is that whether it be one stop along their journey or a part of every week’s routine, that each individual would experience God’s love from the moment they walk in on a Sunday night.

“I like coming here. It’s like a family. I feel safe and enjoy being with the people. I feel welcome when I come and staff and volunteers take special care of me,” one individual told me.

Please pray that God would protect the beautiful community of people he has brought together. Pray that he would enable our staff, volunteers and participants to show each person who comes a glimpse of the care their Creator has for them.

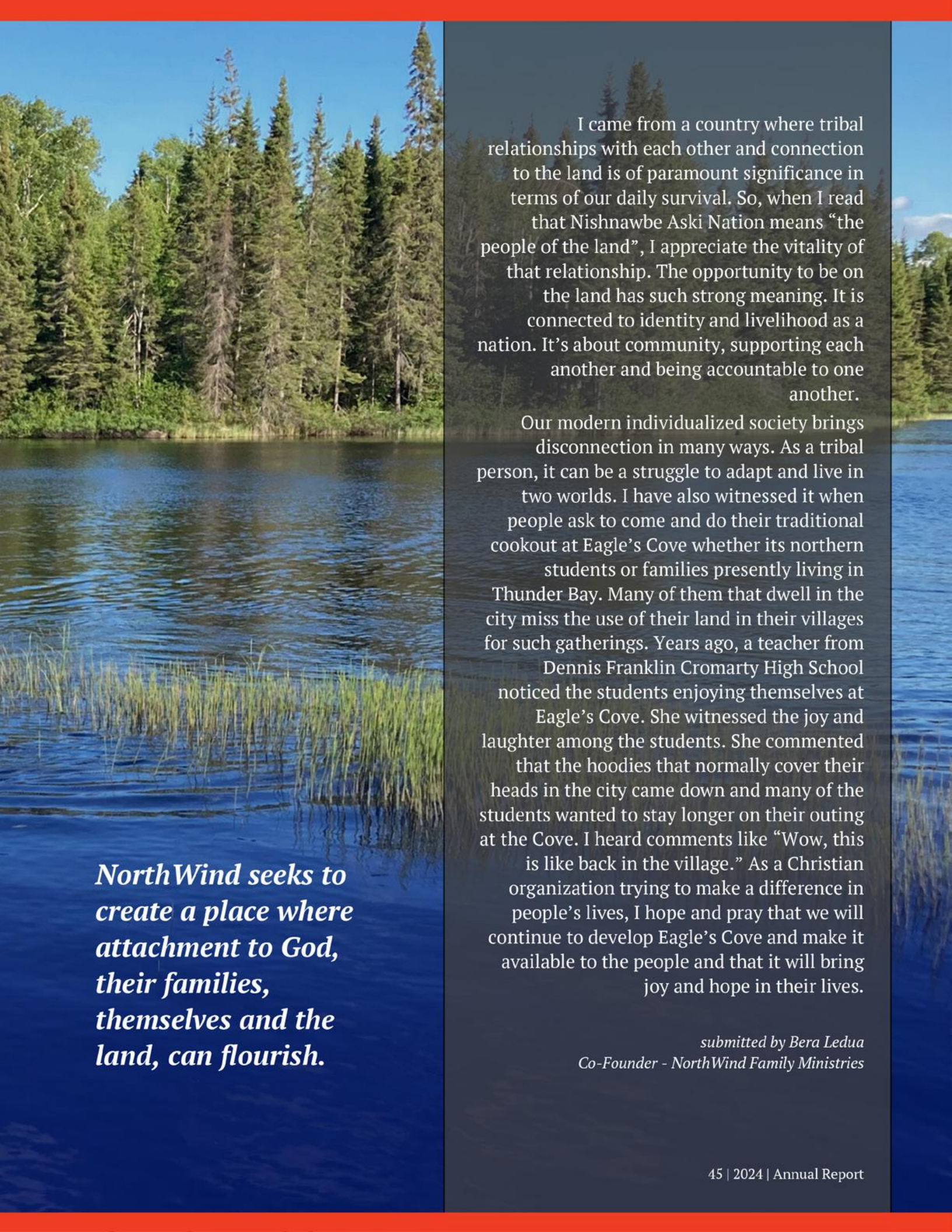
*submitted by Justin Hiebert
The Gathering Program Lead*

Strategic Anchor: **LandBased**



“Place is space that has historical meanings, where some things have happened that are now remembered and that provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken that have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued. Place is indeed a protest against the unpromising pursuit of space.

It is a declaration that our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment, and undefined freedom.” - Walter Brueggemann



*NorthWind seeks to
create a place where
attachment to God,
their families,
themselves and the
land, can flourish.*

I came from a country where tribal relationships with each other and connection to the land is of paramount significance in terms of our daily survival. So, when I read that Nishnawbe Aski Nation means “the people of the land”, I appreciate the vitality of that relationship. The opportunity to be on the land has such strong meaning. It is connected to identity and livelihood as a nation. It’s about community, supporting each another and being accountable to one another.

Our modern individualized society brings disconnection in many ways. As a tribal person, it can be a struggle to adapt and live in two worlds. I have also witnessed it when people ask to come and do their traditional cookout at Eagle’s Cove whether its northern students or families presently living in Thunder Bay. Many of them that dwell in the city miss the use of their land in their villages for such gatherings. Years ago, a teacher from Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School noticed the students enjoying themselves at Eagle’s Cove. She witnessed the joy and laughter among the students. She commented that the hoodies that normally cover their heads in the city came down and many of the students wanted to stay longer on their outing at the Cove. I heard comments like “Wow, this is like back in the village.” As a Christian organization trying to make a difference in people’s lives, I hope and pray that we will continue to develop Eagle’s Cove and make it available to the people and that it will bring joy and hope in their lives.

*submitted by Bera Ledua
Co-Founder - NorthWind Family Ministries*

Facilities

I vividly remember my interview with Executive Director Bonita Ledua, where her words revealed a distinct, God-centered foundation within NorthWind Family Ministries. Her unwavering faith and compassionate leadership left a lasting impact on me, and from that moment, I knew this was more than a job opportunity. I am deeply grateful to Bonita for offering me the chance to join this remarkable organization as a Facility Assistant since April 2024.



Coming from Sri Lanka, I've always believed that God has a plan for each of us. Through my church, Transformation Church, and the guidance of Jeremy and Alissa, I found my path to NorthWind Family Ministries. What I've experienced here has exceeded every expectation. This is not just a workplace; it's a ministry where faith permeates every aspect of life.

NorthWind Family Ministries places Christ at its core, and this spirit is reflected in everything it does. The leadership doesn't just talk about values; they live them, embodying God's teachings in the way they lead and interact with others. It's inspiring to work in an environment where colleagues gather in prayer, uplift one another spiritually, and show genuine care for each other's well-being.

In my role, I manage cleaning, minor repairs, and maintaining the facility. While these tasks may seem routine, they carry a deeper purpose, ensuring the smooth operation of the ministry. My weekly work at Eagle's Cove maintenance has been equally enriching—a peaceful space where I've grown both personally and professionally. Challenges I faced were met with patience and guidance from my managers, Keith Wilson and Timothy Blanchard. I also greatly appreciate Dave's (volunteer) insights during the one week we worked together.

Through the Gathering and the Next Step program, I've gained a deeper appreciation for Indigenous culture, which has enriched my journey. Monthly all-staff meetings have strengthened my faith and helped me grow closer to God.

This experience has been a blessing not only for me but also for my family. The warmth, love, and support we've received have made us feel truly embraced. NorthWind Family Ministries is more than an organization—it is a family rooted in faith, love, and purpose. I'm honored to be part of this mission and look forward to continuing this journey of faith and service.

*submitted by Anton Fernando
Custodian / Maintenance Staff*



Summer Teams

Summer teams are an exciting part of our summers at NorthWind. Connections made throughout the year often develop into meaningful relationships. While the focus is on children's activities, our aim is to involve parents as well, because fostering good family attachment is key to our theory of change. With the extreme pressures many families in low-income complexes face, family time can easily be pushed to the back burner. Summer teams help to give families opportunities to play together. As parents are involved in activities with their children it strengthens family bonds.



Summer teams are not only a benefit to NorthWind or those we serve. We do our best to ensure the team also has a meaningful and spiritual experience. They experience ministering in a cross-cultural setting. They may gain some understanding of what it means for a family to move from their homes in Northern Communities to the unsettling environment of the city where gangs and drugs are an ever-present threat. Teams experience the reward of showing compassion, building relationships, and sharing the Gospel where seeds can be planted for a new outlook on life. While we never impose our beliefs on anyone, we do believe that reconciling our attachment to Creator God is essential to a fruitful life.

“We believe that reconciling our attachment to Creator God is essential to a fruitful life.”



At NorthWind Family Ministries we see the importance of serving as a family. A father recently shared how his daughter had made a friend a year ago. This past summer she brought some gifts for her new friend. Sadly, the friend had gone back to her community in the North; however, at night the daughter had a dream that her friend would be there. Surprisingly, at the end of the week, the girl returned, and the friendship was renewed as though they had never been apart.

*submitted by Karl Janzen
Ministry Partnership Coordinator*

Finances –

Fees for Service

Client Hours

2022/23

1791 total
hours

2023/24

3718 total
hours

2024 Fees



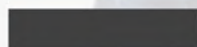
Counselling

\$ 349,963



Family Strengthening Program

\$ 55,953

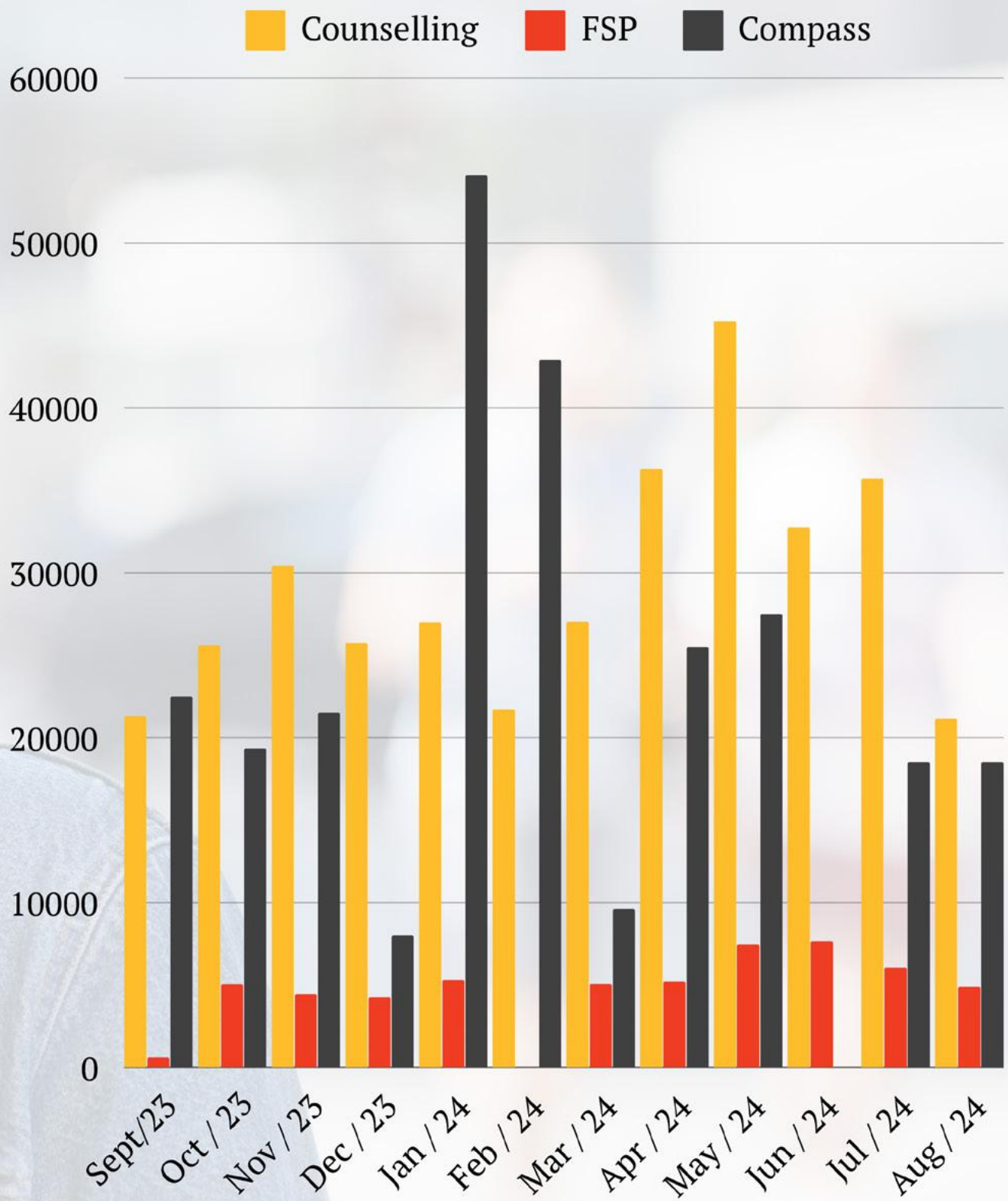


Compass

\$ 267,950

Total Counselling Service Revenues

\$ 673,866



Fees for service

Finances – Grants

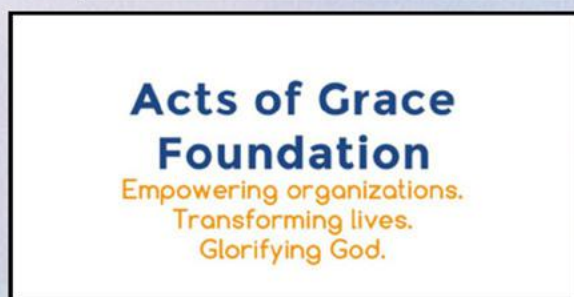
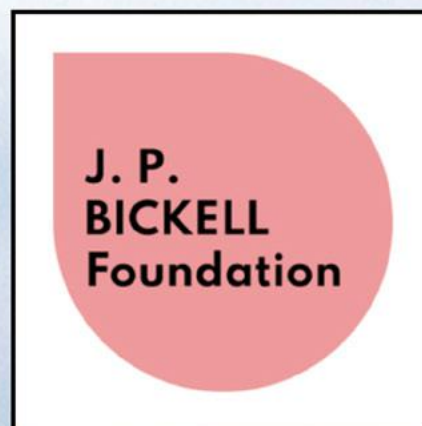


United Way
Thunder Bay
uwaytbay.ca



Thunder Bay
Community
Foundation





Marion Man and Scott Shaw Foundation

THANK YOU!



Finances – Donations

**Our Canadian Supporters
are able to donate in the
following ways:**

For links to donate online, please visit
<https://www.northwindfm.org/donate>


By E-Transfer
E-mail a donation through your bank to
donate@northwindfm.org
please include a password

If you are a Royal Bank customer,
you can give directly similar to the
way you pay your local utility.

E-mail Jeff Kirkpatrick at
jeff.kirkpatrick@northwindfm.org for
your NorthWind account number and
with any special instructions.

By Cheque:
Payable to NorthWind Family Ministries
Write in the memo or on a note where to designate the funds

Mail to:
NorthWind Family Ministries
141 May Street S.
Thunder Bay, ON
P7E 1A9



General Fund Donations

2022/23

\$469,052

2023/24

\$614,506

THANK YOU!

to all our supporters,
partners and friends who
have given so generously!

**Our US supporters are
now able to donate
through Seeds of Love.**

For links to donate online, please visit
<https://www.northwindfm.org/donate/#usa>

By Check
payable to Seeds of Love Inc.
Include a note with where to designate the funds

Mail to:
Seeds of Love Inc.
P.O. Box 1083
Paris, TX 75461
USA

Our Values

We champion the following **VALUES** evidenced by behaviors

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 COMPETENCE

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

CHOICE

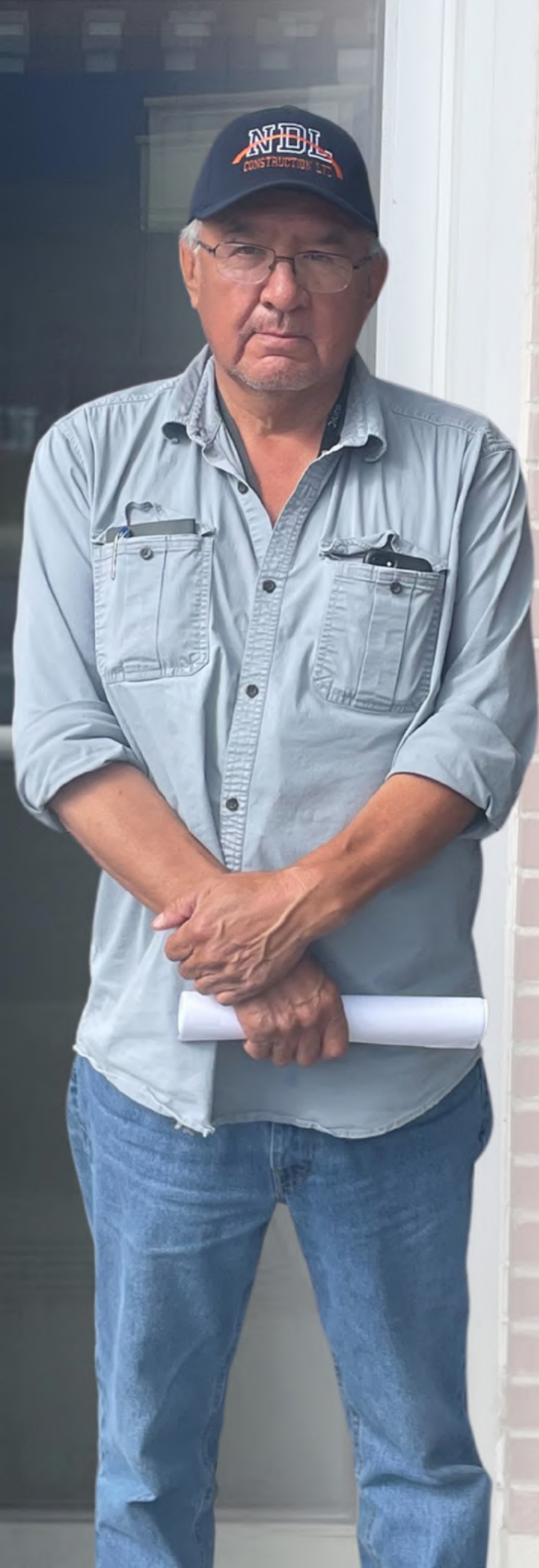
We seek to provide an environment where care is nondirective and autonomy encouraged.

ENGAGEMENT INTO LEADERSHIP

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



NORTHWIND
Family Ministries



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Giiwedin NorthWind

“going home wind”

“...I started to wonder why did they decide on the name Northwind. I thought about the Ojibwe translation “Giiwedin”. The “din” ending comes from the word “noodin” meaning wind. The “Giiwe” means going home. ...The wind is going south. It’s going home.

NorthWind is like a light in the darkness. Welcoming the poor, the hungry, the sick and the downtrodden. There are those who have a lot of faith that volunteer there. With the bible teachings I have felt “I have come home” whenever I sit in on their programming. And I have thought is that why they are called NorthWind? Because they are bringing us home?

I continue with my 12 step addiction recovery meetings. “I come home” to NorthWind as much as possible because I have come to rely on their teachings.

*Jack Achneepineskum, Pays Plat First Nation
NorthWind Participant*



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Thunder Bay, ON
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