



*NEWSLETTER*  
*MARCH 2024*



# Greetings from MAFC Secretary Treasurer

Tansi,

On behalf of the MAFC Board and Executive, I extend heartfelt wishes to all readers. Friendship Centres hold profound significance across our movement, embodying **purpose, dedication, and a bright future for Urban Indigenous folks and communities**. I trust you will find valuable insights in the following pages that support our mission, our values, and our work.

My love for the Friendship Centre movement, the community, and the folks we serve knows no bounds; it resonates deeply within me, and fuels my **dedication to our mission**. Everyday I'm honoured and privileged to be a part of this incredible movement, and incredible work.

*In friendship,  
Desarae Bilinski.*





# Farewell to Executive Director **Ken Munro**

Ken Munro has been the Executive Director of the **Elbert Chartrand Friendship Centre** for the past ten years. During his time as the Executive Director, Ken has accomplished many incredible things, such as advocating for employee health benefits, pensions, and growing the workforce from 20 to over 40. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ken partnered with various organizations and worked tirelessly to deliver over 1400 food kits to students. Additionally, he dedicated his time towards expanding the youth and seniors programs.

Ken's wonderful team asked that we include the following note as they bid farewell to their Executive Director:





# Message for **Ken Munro**

**Dear Ken,**

As your time with us draws close, we cannot help but reflect on our incredible journey together over the past decade. Your leadership, vision, and dedication have been the cornerstones of our organization's success, and we are profoundly grateful for your impact on each of us.

Under your guidance, we have achieved remarkable milestones, faced challenges head-on, and grown as professionals and a close-knit family. Your unwavering commitment to excellence, integrity, and compassion has inspired us to strive for greatness and prioritize our team's well-being and the community we serve.

Your wisdom, guidance, and mentorship will be greatly missed, but the values and lessons you have instilled in us will continue to guide our work and inspire us to reach new heights. As you embark on this new chapter in your journey, please know that your legacy here will endure, and the impact of your leadership will be felt for years to come.

Thank you, Ken, for your invaluable contributions, believing in us, and leading by example. You have left an indelible mark on our organization, and we are forever grateful for the privilege of working alongside you.

Wishing you all the best in your future endeavors. May your path be filled with continued success, happiness, and fulfillment.

**With deepest gratitude and warmest regards,  
Tanya Powell ECFC Executive Director & ECFC staff.**





# Walking Together

## *The Importance of Indigenous Youth and Elder Relationships*

It is more crucial than ever to **protect the mental health of young Indigenous people**. While statistics could only provide a partial picture, understanding the lived experiences is essential. Indigenous youth often encounter unique emotional and social challenges that may influence their mental health. These challenges include historical trauma passed down through generations, cultural disconnection, and ongoing injustices that indigenous communities are faced with.

The Indigenous worldview has been rooted in the knowledge and traditions that have been passed down through generations by knowledge keepers, referred to as elders. Strong ties between indigenous youth and their elders help them feel grounded in their cultural heritage, which can contribute to a greater sense of purpose and self-worth. **Building elder-youth connections** helps preserve and revitalize parts of the indigenous culture that have been historically marginalized, which in turn provides a sense of belonging and identity for the Indigenous youth. By fostering these important and beautiful connections, youth can learn from the wisdom and experiences of their elders and empower future generations.





Understanding that Indigenous youth play a vital role in shaping the present and future of our communities, the Manitoba Friendship Centres **focus on the holistic well-being and mental health of youth.** To build meaningful intergenerational connections and to promote wellness and healing from the impacts of colonization, our Friendship Centres across Manitoba **amplify the voice of our youth.** Events like the “Youth Wellness Gathering” that took place in June 2023 help strengthen resilience through the teachings and lived experiences of elders that help the youth gain their voice and self-identity. Although promoting mental health and wellness is an ongoing process that requires long-term commitment, **building cultural pride through traditional teachings** helps empower the youth to navigate through the unique challenges they face.

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***Rubani Kaur,  
MAFC Mental Health Navigator.***





# Friendship Centre

## Spotlight



### Riverton & District Friendship Centre

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The Riverton & District Friendship Centre has long history of support and development of young leaders. Desare Bilinski, Riverton Youth Engagement Coordinator, believes in centering youth at the forefront of the Friendship Centre Movement.

*“I am deeply committed to seeing Urban Indigenous Youth across the movement thrive and succeed. My vision for youth in Manitoba is one where every young person feels a strong sense of belonging, connection to culture, and access to resources that support their aspiration.*

*I hope to see the rebuild of the Manitoba Indigenous Youth Council, a community where Urban Indigenous Youth are empowered to advocate and become leaders to positively impact their communities. By investing in our youth, we can create a future in MAFC where youth are celebrated for their resilience, strength, for their voice, and their contributions to society.” - Desarae Bilinski, RDFC*

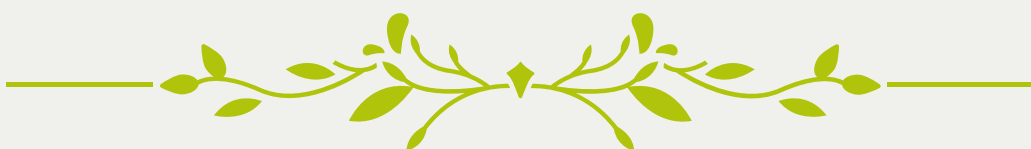




## Riverton Mural

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The Centre asked **Nevaeh Munroe**, an active youth in the Friendship movement, to do a mural in their drop in Centre. Nevaeh wanted to convey **the message of youth reclaiming their identity**, they also wanted to **represent all Indigenous people**. Nevaeh added a row of flowers to represent Métis people, an Inuksuk for Inuit identity, they also added an abstract medicine wheel across the wall to represent way of life. The rainbows are important as they represent 2-spirit and 2SLGBTQ+. Nevaeh wanted to make sure that they created a **welcoming space where all youth felt welcomed, and loved**.







## *Our Missing Girls: Staying Safe as an Indigenous Youth*

It has become evident that gender-based violence disproportionately affects women, specifically of Indigenous ancestry. Between 1980 and 2012, 175 Indigenous girls and women were reported as missing, and a staggering 1017 were confirmed to be the victim of a homicide (RCMP, 2015). Moreover, the 2004 General Survey found the rate of violence against Indigenous women 15 years and older to be 3.5 times higher than non-Indigenous women (Statistics Canada). To put it simply, the Indigenous community is hurting, and it is now more important than ever to provide our youth with safe spaces to foster their empowerment.





Friendship Centres in Manitoba are working diligently to provide these safe spaces for urban Indigenous youths, specifically young women, and girls. Programs such as the girl's empowerment class at Elbert Chartrand Friendship Centre are helping girls gain confidence and independence, and the **Dauphin at Risk Teen** (DART) program reduces recidivism amongst teens and helps them return to school, ultimately providing youth with more protective factors against gender-based violence. Moreover, it's been proven that loss of culture is a major risk factor for poorer mental health in Indigenous youth (Heid et. al, 2022) which can be a gateway to substance use and possibly prone to becoming a victim of violence. Programs such as Flin Flon Friendship Centre's "**My Path, My Journey, My Legacy**", provides youth a safe space to connect through sharing cultural values and customs, and strengthens their connection to their culture. These are some of the many ways friendship centres in Manitoba are helping keep our Indigenous youth safe, and their tireless efforts do not go unnoticed.

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*Matthew Slusky,  
MAFC WAGE Project Coordinator.*





# NAFC Urban Indigenous Social Economy Forum



Tanis Grimolfson at the UISEF in Ottawa, Ontario.

In late February, Executive Director of RDFC, Tanis Grimolfson, BFC Executive Director Gail Cullen and Executive Assistant Jeremy Monias attended NAFC's Urban Indigenous Social Economy Forum held in Ottawa, Ontario. Tanis Grimolfson was given the opportunity to speak at the forum about their Friendship Centre's innovative new project, "Food for the Soul". This initiative has given rise to a sustainable method of reducing food insecurity alongside RDFC's food back through their community gardens. Additionally, Gail Cullen and Jeremy Monias from BFC were invited to speak about their project, the "Indigenous Eats" food trailer, which is filling a gap in Brandon's food industry with delicious food that revolves around Bannock. The project also focuses on helping indigenous youth with skill building & becoming reliable employees." From all of us at MAFC, well done, Tanis, Gail and Jeremy!





# MAFC Word Search

The Manitoba Friendship Centres are part of the Friendship Centre Movement which is Canada's largest Urban Indigenous Delivery Infrastructure. Established in 1971, the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres (MAFC) is the Provincial-Territorial organization in Manitoba that advocates for the collective interests of its 11-member Friendship Centres.

In this word search you'll find hidden Manitoba Friendship Centre locations, can you find them all? Each location is hidden horizontally, vertically, or diagonally - in both directions.

K	A	B	N	D	E	R	T	A	N	G	K	L	E	P	B
G	N	D	S	K	M	Z	N	O	T	R	E	V	I	R	A
E	F	S	A	G	E	M	R	H	T	H	E	P	A	S	H
D	K	A	P	U	L	K	R	I	Y	B	G	N	O	K	L
S	R	Y	A	E	P	V	A	E	G	T	D	L	R	W	V
A	I	K	U	Q	O	H	R	L	B	O	H	S	S	W	E
A	K	E	Y	F	H	W	I	N	N	I	P	E	G	E	G
B	L	N	D	W	E	P	X	N	Z	N	A	L	Y	N	N
Q	E	T	F	N	Y	X	O	R	C	O	Y	K	A	L	N
W	S	M	Y	G	R	S	Y	R	J	C	A	L	T	B	O
Y	G	G	T	F	P	T	O	R	T	W	S	A	G	R	L
T	R	G	C	M	U	H	B	V	H	A	A	R	G	F	F
E	Y	S	O	A	Y	K	X	E	G	U	G	F	M	J	N
W	H	H	S	E	S	W	A	N	R	I	V	E	R	E	I
C	T	A	M	D	Z	U	E	B	X	O	J	O	Y	U	L
B	M	K	E	X	B	X	J	L	I	Y	U	G	D	H	F

- Brandon
- Dauphin
- Flin Flon
- Lynn Lake
- Portage
- Riverton
- Selkirk
- Swan River
- The Pas
- Thompson
- Winnipeg







# Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres

“An Urban Indigenous Grassroots Organization”.



FLIN FLON ABORIGINAL  
FRIENDSHIP CENTRE, INC.



BECAUSE ALL PEOPLE ARE EQUAL



Dauphin Friendship Centre



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