

STREETS

SERVING WINNIPEG'S WEST END

MAY 2025

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM OUR COMMUNITY | VOL 3 NO 6 | FREE TO WEST END RESIDENTS

WOLSELEYLEAF.CA

Little disagreement in disability debate; Support hard to get in Canada

By Terese Taylor

In a debate focusing on accessibility and the programs to support people with disabilities in Canada, debate moderator

Marcy Markusa, host of CBC's Information Radio show couldn't get much disagreement between candidates.

Although they were extended an invitation, and questions that would be part of the debate were sent in advance to Manitoba political parties running in the federal election, the Manitoba Conservative party and Peoples Party of Canada did not

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Leah escapes orange massacre - 'Best riding in the country!' ...Story p 9

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A tenant appreciation event hosted by Travis (2nd from left) and Stephanie (3rd from left), for the tenants of Westminster Housing Society, whose properties are managed by Five Stones.

Building community in the West End for 26 years

By Cohen Berg

When Travis and Stephanie Unger bought a rooming house in the West End in the summer of 1999, their intention was simply to live with others. Although well aware of the perceptions of a dangerous neighbourhood, and rooming houses in general, they moved into an 11-bedroom home in an area then called "Murder's Half-acre" — wanting not only to build community, but to be built into it.

Twenty-six years later, they still call that rooming house home; they've lived with almost 100 different people; and their mission hasn't

changed. If anything, it's grown: they are now the founders and owners of Five Stones Inc., a property management company working to bridge the gap between low-income and good-quality housing — and provide the kind of community they love.

Before moving to Spence Street, Travis and Stephanie were renters on Victor Street, and both worked for nonprofit organizations. Through their work, they each came to their own realization that they

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RED DRESS DAY

Winnipeggers continue to advocate for MMIWG2S+, marked every year on May 5 as National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People. More than 300 people attended an annual march (photo below) and gatherings were held across the city.



(From Left) Shena, Ren, Mayran, Jessica, Megan and Oriana provide support and resources for women at the West Central Women's Resource Centre.

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The Idaho Stop. Why are cyclists so stoked about it?

Winnipeg cycling community's stop-as-yield advocacy unfruitful after eight months

by Cohen Berg

A cyclist approaches a stop sign, slows down, and coasts through the intersection after checking for traffic.

This hypothetical cyclist is now in violation of the Highway Traffic Act—the law—but the cycling community in Winnipeg has been advocating for a change.

On Aug. 22, 2024, the Winnipeg cycling community came together in a demonstration calling for the government to implement a law, known as the Idaho stop, that would make it legal. Not only could cyclists treat stop signs as yield signs, but also red lights as stop signs.

Some say it would cause confusion at stop signs. Patty Wiens, cyclist and official Bicycle Mayor of Winnipeg said what did cause confusion was when more than 65 people followed all cycling laws in the demonstration, stopping before each stop sign and riding single file.

"There were two collisions in the first five minutes," said Wiens. "[Drivers] were confused, wondering why we were stopping, why we were riding single file."

Implementing the Idaho stop would require modifying the Highway Traffic Act, which is the responsibility of the provincial government.

As of April this year, the Government of Manitoba had not taken any actions towards the implementation of any such law.

When asked about the Idaho stop, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Lisa Naylor said it would "require a lot of study" because it doesn't already exist in Canada. Minister Naylor said while the Idaho stop has been discussed in the media, the interview with *The Leaf* was the first time the issue had been brought to her, and wouldn't be addressed until "well into the future" without a formal request from a stakeholder.

The Idaho stop legislation was first introduced in 1982 in its namesake state, which saw a 14.5% decrease in bicycle injuries the year after it was adopted. In regards to overall bicycle safety, Idaho has since become 30.4% better than Sacramento and Bakersfield, California, its closest matched cities.

"The bottom line on the



Is it safe to go? Cycling is safest when cars and bikes can stay clear of each other. Photo Cohen Berg

Idaho stop is cities that have implemented [it] have seen an increase in safety," said Janice Lukes, Chair of Public Works in Winnipeg.

"The less time we spend in front of cars, the better," said Wiens. "It saves time both for the cyclists and for the drivers." Not only does it save time, it reduces the time cyclists spend in front of vehicles, lowering the risk of collisions.

Cyclist Hillary Rosentreter said that she has been harassed by drivers behind her, who were frustrated by how long it took her to fully stop and check for traffic at a stop sign.

"The Highway Traffic Act is criminalizing safety in too many ways, and at the expense of people who don't use cars to get around the majority of

their time," said Rosentreter.

Wiens was careful to clarify the Idaho stop doesn't simply allow cyclists to speed through stop signs and stressed that they still must yield. "If there's someone that was there before you, you stop and wait. And if there are pedestrians, they have the right of way."

Owner of Natural Cycleworks Matty Adair said the divide is very black and white, with cyclists supporting it and drivers not. He thinks education plays a large role in this divide and would like to see more school cycling programs.

Wiens said the usual argument against the Idaho stop is, "If I have to stop, you should too," but this comes primarily from drivers with little to no cycling experience. Wiens' re-

sponse is that the Idaho stop makes things easier for both sides, reminding drivers that when a cyclist is required to stop, so are the cars behind them, slowing things down for both.

"We're trying to get out of their way. We're not trying to make it harder for [drivers]," said Wiens.

Wiens said the difference between drivers' and cyclists' ability to regain momentum is important to remember. For drivers, it's as simple as accelerating; cyclists must work to slowly regain their speed and are far more vulnerable while doing so.

Rosentreter said she thinks the reason the Idaho stop hasn't been implemented is because the government is "not feeling enough pressure at the moment."

"They're not thinking of safety; they're thinking of votes," said Wiens, who attributed it to the amount of votes that come from drivers in comparison to cyclists.

Wiens highlighted the importance of putting pressure on members of government, especially Wab Kinew, because "the truth is, [change] all comes from the top."

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WEST END
CULTURAL CENTRE

DISABILITY

DISABILITY DEBATE ...from page 1

send any candidates to participate in the debate organized by the Manitoba League for Persons With Disabilities (MLPD). Candidates Leah Gazan (re-elected MP for Winnipeg Centre), Gary Gervais (Green Party Winnipeg Centre), Cam Scott, (Communist Party Winnipeg South), and Ian McIntyre, (Liberal Elmwood-Transcona) participated in the debate, and Animal Protection Party candidate Debra Wall (Winnipeg Centre) was in attendance at the event.

All candidates were in agreement that although the Accessible Canada Act (ACA) was a good piece of legislation, in practice, disabled Canadians are being left to fight their own battles. Gazan was also concerned that one of the first moves by new Liberal party leader Mark Carney was to remove some ministerial positions that focused on human rights, including the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, and Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities.

Candidates agreed that the federal government has created a number of supports but "they are just not being implemented or enforced," said Green Party's Gervais. He also watched as a non-profit housing provider was left to expire, and purchased by a for-profit business, saying that to provide the same number of affordable housing units today would be "tens of millions of dollars."

Gazan said "We know the disability benefit is not enough, people shouldn't have to be placed in a position in the first place to have to prove that they're disabled enough to get the benefit." She also highlighted that Jordan's Principle program was brought about through a court case, and "not done in good faith."

MacIntyre, a retired teacher who worked with students with disabilities said

some positive initiatives from the federal government include funding to cover the cost of providing doctors' notes, 154 Million to "make churches and community centres more accessible with ramps and infrastructure," and the disability tax credit (DTC), a \$200 a month benefit which will start this July. But when, as an afterthought MacIntyre added that the federal government programs "aren't advertised very well," all the candidates chimed in to agree.

Gazan said that some provinces and territories will claw back the DTC (the Manitoba provincial government has announced that it won't), and that the amount should be doubled. Gervais eventually told Marcusa that "maybe the debate would be more interesting if there were more diverse viewpoints."

MLPD executive director Melissa Graham told The Leaf she hoped that the federal government will immediately cut the red tape that has plagued the DTC, and that it will be automatically be attached to other benefits that disabled persons have qualified for (such as a provincial benefit and designation already in place).

"I would like to see some funding to organizations to provide help to navigate the DTC," says Graham. After the election, "that would be the main priority," she said.

Manitoba Chiefs from across the province organized a rally to "rock the vote" and highlight the backlog of 150,000 outstanding cases of Jordan's Principle funding for educational, mental health, medical equipment needs and therapy for First Nation and Inuit children and youth with disabilities on April 25 at the forks in the lead-up to the election. Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation Chief Angela Levasseur called on media to stop por-

traying First Nation communities in a negative light, and to honour treaty obligations in healthcare.

Chief of Brokenhead treaty Nation Gord Bluesky said "I'm proud of the work that we have going on... As first nations leaders we are tired of our people being portrayed in a negative way."

Southern Chief Organization's grand Chief Jerry Daniels introduced the organizations youth Chief Lacy Bird, from Black River First Nation. "Our youth deserve the a life full of opportunity provided by Jordan's principal. And it's really sad that it took a baby to lose his life for this to happen for a youth. It upsets me a lot and I'm carrying this bear and it has the weight of a baby and it's just like I can't imagine the pain that his mother felt when she lost him. And so I just wanted to say that I'm so glad that everyone's here. I'm so thankful for you all."

"We will be the change, and we will not stop until we see that change happening in every single one of our young people's lives. That's what it's about, it is about creating the best possible future for our children." said Daniels.

"The government has failed our children, but we will not stand and watch this happen," said Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Grand Chief Garrison Settee. "We are going to keep the government accountable. Children are sacred. This is important, this is critical, we have to rock the vote because our nations depend on it to move our nations forward."



Trechelle Bunn, Chief of Birdtail Sioux First Nation, and thought to be the youngest Chief elected in Canada spoke at the rally calling for the end to the backlog of approval for Jordan's Principle programming meant to help provide therapy, care and medical necessities for children with disabilities and mental health needs. Along with Manitoba Chiefs across the province, she called on First Nations to "rock the vote." (photo above)

Candidates couldn't disagree on the solutions to improving access to support for people with disabilities (photo bottom left) Ian MacIntyre, Cam Scott, Leah Gazan, Gary Gervais and moderator Marcy Markusa



NATURE

Neighbourhood meeting hears details on saving Wolseley's elms

by Mike Maunder

The tree committee of Wolseley Residents' Association held an Earth Day meeting explaining to about 120 residents how elm trees can be inoculated against Dutch Elm Disease.

The committee is launching a campaign, with flyers being delivered door-to-door in Wolseley, to try to raise \$100,000 which would enable saving approx. 150 elms along Wolseley and Westminster, considered the gateway to the community.

"When the campaign is launched, please take a walk down either of these streets and appreciate the big, beautiful elms," explained Pat McCarthy Briggs, chair of the tree committee. "Consider what life is like for us under the deep, beautiful shade these trees provide, and consider what it would be like without them."

Arborists explained details of the process at the meeting. It's pretty much guaranteed if the tree's roots are a safe distance from any tree that has Dutch Elm Disease and is inoculated before it has any signs of the disease. The process is expensive (\$600-\$1,000 a tree, depending on size) and needs to be repeated every three years.

Presenters explained the Legislature and the City of Mordeai have used the inoculation process for years to save their elms. Also presenting at the meeting were neighbours from Newman Street who successfully used the process to inoculate seven trees on their block last year.

One participant at the April 22 meeting was Lenore resident Valerie Regehr. Ten years ago, she noticed the loss of elms along Lenore, in the block between Wolseley and

Westminster. "I was chair of our block committee banding trees against canker-worms," she recalled. "Ten years ago, the red dots began appearing on the elms. I'd estimate that in that ten years, we've lost 30 out of the 40 elms that were on this block. Now only ten are left. It's changed the whole environment of the street – from shady to intense heat."

Her special elm on the boulevard in front of her house is the grandmother of all the elms on the block. She and neighbours have set up a bench and garden area around it. They've tied ribbons honouring Indigenous causes.

But, most important, ten years ago they investigated the inoculation process themselves and banded together as neighbours to save the grandmother elm and two other elms down the street. Inoculating the three trees cost \$2,300, which neighbours contributed in 2019. They did so again in 2022. And, even though some neighbours have moved, Valerie will be contacting neighbours again this year to inoculate the trees for their three-year treatment.

She finds that neighbours are prepared to contribute what's needed to preserve the few elms that remain. "The big old trees are like the guardians of the block," she says. As well as shade, shelter for animals and birds, and their role as nature's most advanced breathing machine (converting CO2 to Oxygen), in Wolseley at least, trees are the main aesthetic of the neighbourhood, increasing



Valerie Regehr sits in the shade of Lenore's grandmother elm. The six saplings growing on the boulevard behind her are starting their lives where, only ten years ago, six big elms towered.

beauty, peace of mind, and property values.

Valerie Regehr is confident the residents of Lenore understand these values

enough to contribute what's needed to save the four elms remaining on their block of Lenore.

Pat McCarthy-Briggs hopes residents of Wolseley

understand these values enough to contribute to the project which will save many of these old guardian trees – or see them gone forever.

STREETS
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MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



Ralph Bryant



Left to right: Eddy Ayoub, Ralph Bryant, Marion Cooper, Markus Chambers, and Tracy Ann Campbell at the launch of The Love Notes Campaign

Healing loudly, with heart

By Terese Taylor

"I am the third generation to be hospitalized in my family," says Ralph Bryant. "It set me on a path to inquire into mental health outcomes. How we can shine a light so that more people can heal," he says.

Bryant, originally from New York, and now living in Wolseley, has launched an innovative project to help people connect in their neighbourhoods, find supports for mental health, and to lift people's spirits.

It starts with messages of care - either making one, or finding one.

Bryant's Love Notes Campaign launched at the Canadian Mental Health Association (at the corner of Ruby St. and Portage Ave.) during Canadian Mental Health Week on May 7, but it is just the beginning of activities that will take place across the city, and province until October 10, World Mental Health Day. On that day, the Love Notes Campaign will kick

into high gear.

Bryant calls it a "Love Bomb."

Although awareness has grown substantially about mental health around the world since the effects of COVID, there is still a stigma that is associated with it. People can easily find a hospital, or a minor sports injury clinic. But when it comes to the earlier stages of a mental health issue, what options do you have? Therapists, resource

or community support programs may be hard to find, often have a long waitlist, and website information is often out of date.

When looking into mental health outcomes, Bryant found some disturbing statistics. One was that Black men, in the US, are three times more likely to commit suicide than Black women. In Manitoba, Indigenous youth are four times more likely to commit suicide than other youth. Manitoba's Advo-

cate for Children and Youth has called it "an enduring youth suicide crisis," with the highest ever number of suicides reported in 2023.

One of the ways the Love Notes Campaign hopes to bring change, says Bryant, is to meet people where they are at.

The Love Notes Campaign will bring the paper, and anyone who feels inspired can write and design messages that are meaningful to their own situation, or something that could be helpful to others.

At the launch, Huruy Michael wrote a Maya Angelou poem on a poster sheet, saying that her poem "has everything people need." Kayla Shafe told The Leaf that she wants to talk to people and make sure they "don't feel alone." In honour of her father, who committed suicide, Shafe tattooed herself with a semi-colon symbol meant to

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Continues from pg 6

encourage people to "tell the rest of the story. I'm all about advocating for mental health because it was my dad's lack of services that made him isolated to then end his journey," says Chafe.

Love Notes has partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association, and Art City, will hold events with the Sea Bears Basketball Team, and at Pride events. A goal is to hold an event in a bar in every neighbourhood, in churches who would like to participate, and at Stoney Mountain Prison.

Bryant hopes to train 15 advocates in mental health First Aid and trauma-informed care. And with the outreach of the campaign, be able to provide neighbourhood specific, up to date, mental health services, programs and supports on each Love Note through a QR code that will take people straight to the information.

"In hearing about this, I was doing a little bit at research...This is exactly what the city needs," said Deputy Mayor Markus Chambers, with greetings from the City. "When we all feel included we all feel like we belong, that raises our spirit."

At a particularly tough time, Chambers reached out to friends and his support network to keep in touch with him to get through it. "These notes are a real check-in challenge," said Chambers.

Eddy Ayoub, director of Art City programming that provides always free, all ages art projects (the whole family is invited, he emphasizes) said "we aren't mental health professionals but we know art holds intrinsic value for people's



Huruy Michael, (top photo) shares a poem, Kayla Shafe shows her tattoo in honour of her father



mental health whether you are making the art, or one of the people walking down the sidewalk who sees what we made. I love that this is very deliberate. This is a very important project we will be doing at our sites across the city."

Canadian Mental Health Association director Marion Cooper said "the check-in challenge I think is an invitation to actually stop and actually say, you know what? I'm having some struggles right now. Thank you for letting me know that you care...We really feel inspired (by the project,)" she said.

Bryant says that sometimes, "the right message, at the right time," can save a life.

For more information, or to participate or organize an event, go to lovenotesmb.com

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Gazan re-elected; holds off Blue Red sweep of province

by Terese Taylor

After a short election campaign, and a tough year as a female Member of Parliament, Leah Gazan handily won her Winnipeg Centre riding, one of only seven NDP members left in the federal government.

Although it was expected the election would be called sometime between the early spring and the fall, all other candidates in the riding were either appointed or approved by acclamation because of Gazan's strong relationship to the riding.

"We fought for the humanity of every person in this community, that all people regardless of where they find themselves, will be treated with dignity and respect, and with love because that's what we are about in Winnipeg Centre," Gazan announced at her campaign headquarters.

"That's what makes us the centre of the universe and the best riding in the country!" she

enthusiastically declared.

Rahul Walia entered the race for the Liberals, and canvassed the whole riding four times, starting before the election was declared. At age 23, he was one of the country's youngest candidates.

"It's been overwhelmingly positive," Walia told *The Leaf* midway through the election, with lots of people willing to talk about the issues they cared about when he stopped by. Residents were candid about the threat of Trump, about the war in Gaza, and about housing. In particular, Walia said, "people want to talk about issues, like crime, but in a compassionate way, in the sense that we are...looking at being tougher on root causes." This would include better wraparound supports for people with addictions, Walia emphasized. "We don't have as many detox centres as we need."

Walia pointed out that the median annual income in Winnipeg Centre is \$35,000, and has bounced between being the second or third poorest riding in the country. With little change in wages over the last decades, he said, the fees for people to access private mental health services are way out of reach. But Walia said he also noticed a sense of resiliency in the riding. "If you give us a little bit of hope, we can take it and run with it," Walia said.

This year, all the windows at Leah Gazan's office on Sargent were broken. But in a story about harassment directed at women MPs, which has risen dramatically in recent years, Gazan said that Indigenous women in Canada have experienced higher levels of violence directed at them, and it was one of the reasons that she couldn't step back from her role as MP. She also acknowledged that "people are hurt-



An enthusiastic crowd cheers Gazan as results come in.

ing," and that one of her jobs in the federal government is to fight to improve people's lives materially.

On the campaign trail, Gazan attended many community events, and homes. Many supporters remember encouraging her to run, before she had ever entered politics. At one event, grandmothers brought out their younger family members, especially their granddaughters, to hear her speak, and to acknowledge the important support Gazan was able to arrange across party lines for issues they felt were fundamental to women in Winnipeg; especially bringing much needed support to one of Canada's last stand-alone clinics for women's health.

On CBC's election day programming, a Liberal political advisor on its flagship Power and Politics show suggested that the riding would likely be lost, saying that he had heard that Jagmeet Singh had actively avoided visiting Gazan. In reply, an NDP commentator shook her head and dismissed his comments. Singh, she said, didn't need to visit the riding because the seat was one of the few that was safe.

Given the negative polling as election day came close — which proved correct in the case for Singh, but wrong when it came to Winnipeg Centre — Gazan may have seen the writ-

ing on the wall. The inability to connect to voters in an authentic way, and to take their ideas to parliament and fight for them wasn't what people felt the national NDP had been doing before Trump arrived on the scene. The lack of connection only grew worse when Trump did.

Gazan has always liked to joke that growing up, her family was married to politics. At election debates and rallies in the runup to voting day, she shared that she was an activist before she decided to run, and would always continue her advocacy for the people and organizations in the riding that she loves and deeply respects.

"This was a hard night for us as the NDP", she announced to a happy, and relieved crowd once the vote was counted. "We won because we believe in human rights. We need people holding the Liberals to account to fight corporate greed. We fought for women's rights, LGBTQIA rights. We will not stay silent when trans kids are being attacked in school; Winnipeg Centre will have none of that. We fought for climate justice."

"For everybody that didn't vote for me, I love you. To all of you that came out to win a really tough battle, I love you. I'm so proud to be a representative of this community," said Gazan.



Conservative candidate a no-show - but supporter boosts the cause on his bike

by Terese Taylor

Romeo Zapata has always done his part during elections, and told *The Leaf* the last time around, he cycled around with a Liberal sign, the party he has always supported federally since he first emigrated to Canada. But this year was different.

"We need to know our limits. Every country has a

budget," he explained, and said that Canada should do a better job at explaining ours. He has also felt a lot of camaraderie in his newly chosen political affiliation. Zapata said he sported a "Canada First" shirt while travelling to Ottawa, and while trying to buy gas at a Costco station, and and fussing with his membership card, a young

man stepped up to tell him he liked his shirt; because of it, he was going to buy his gas.

(Although *The Leaf* reached out to the Conservative candidate, as was common to news sources across the country, we did not receive any communication from the candidate or their office).

The beautiful, haunting, groovy, ethereal music of Chuck Copenace

By Terese Taylor

Chuck Copenace was in high school the first time he was compared to Miles Davis.

The Ojibway trumpet student loved how he felt when he was working with sound, and admits to listening to his parents' records over and over. It meant that not only were there technical aspects to master on the instrument, but he also knew where he wanted those sounds to go.

On some of the few times Copenace has tried to step back from music, it has always found its way to return.. Even though Copenace says he "self-sabotaged" his last years in high school, a prof sought him out when he noticed that he hadn't applied at Brandon university's school of music to make sure that he got into his classes. Jazz stuck to Copenace, and unusual in first years university music studies, Copenace already had a command for the feel of the music.

Years later, after returning to Winnipeg from BC, (and playing a lot of experimental electronica) when he threw himself into a job with Main Street Project, he was enjoying the front-line work and let his music slide. But after attending a sweat ceremony, he says, "I guess something happened." Out of the blue, "I phoned a venue and booked a gig."

The only thing missing was



Chuck Copenace plays a sweet trumpet at CCFM, accompanied by Kyle Wedlake on Saxophone, Victor Lopez on guitar, Justin Alcock on drums, and (to his right) Henry Onwuchekwa on bass.

a band.

Copenace decided not to fight the calling, got Winnipeg musicians together and began to incorporate sweat ceremony melodies into his original compositions.

He also got recruited to the Julia Keefe Indigenous Big Band in the US, and continues to tour with it throughout the year, its only Canadian

member.

The big band has taken Copenace to Olympia Washington, the Kennedy Center in New York City, Alaska and Colorado. This month Copenace will join the band to play in Sacramento California. The experience has opened his eyes in more than one way.

When Julia introduced an Indigenous band member from

the Boston area, the name twiggled a memory for Copenace. Musician Marc Cary had played on an album with the late Roy Hargave, an album that Copenace had played over and over growing up. "I memorized all the solos and I could sing all the parts. I remember it, just loving the piano playing. He was creating these soundscapes that I loved," says

Copenace.

He has since become familiar with many Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous communities who have contributed to the development of jazz, and their stories and struggles. "There were a lot of jazz greats that had Indigenous blood," Copenace shares, something that he had never heard of growing up.

Copenace released his second album *Oshki Manitou* (digital) in the fall of 2023 to honour the birth of his children, and has been sticking closer to home over the last few years. The album brought a lot of excitement for his expansive and atmospheric sound. Copenace's music has been called groovy, haunting, ethereal, and fully capable of getting people into the "zone."

In February he was one of the first performers to launch this year's season of Mardi Jazz at the Franco Manitoba Cultural Centre, and played at the Moses Mayes reunion concert earlier this month.

Copenace takes the music away, but also lets it take him. In the works, possibly over the next month, he is getting ready to release a new song.

To watch for its release: instagram at ChuckCMusic.

Save Public Lap Swim at Kinsmen Sherbrook Pool

By Karen Mackintosh

At the onset of the Great Depression, civic dreamers paid \$125,000 to build Sherbrook Pool. Winnipeg's first Olympic-sized pool was constructed in 1931 as a municipal relief project. The pool was built in the Art Deco style and its decorative elements include the words Public Baths carved into the stone frame above the front entrance. As of June 5, this entrance may be closed to early morning swimmers.

Current city leadership is considering cutting Sherbrook Pool's popular morning lap swim for the summer. The morning time is essential to people who have jobs or other

duties during the day and evening, including women with children and other caregiving responsibilities. Closure would be a miserly measure by the City of Winnipeg to reduce staff and other operating costs at an established pool.

Recreation reduces social isolation, creates community connections and helps improve physical and mental health. The Winnipeg Recreation Strategy reports that swimming is the most popular indoor leisure activity of Winnipeggers. This is consistent with findings from Statistics Canada's Survey Series on People and their Communities, which found swim-

ming is one of the most popular sports among Canadians and the most popular sport of Canadian women.

The 2009 report Winnipeg's Best Kept Secret: A Community Development Vision for Sherbrook Pool found that lower income communities benefit the most from recreation but often face more barriers, including lack of neighbourhood facilities. The report also found that Sherbrook Pool's large shallow end and warmer water provide a more accessible environment than other city pools, and that people with arthritis, multiple sclerosis and fibromyalgia

come to the pool for accessibility reasons. In the summer, the pool provides relief during heat waves, which have more extreme impacts in inner city neighbourhoods. In its council-approved 2024 to 2027 Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Plan, the City of Winnipeg commits to diverse recreation and leisure programming to increase participation for low-income and equity groups. Reducing hours at an accessible inner-city pool is counter to this commitment.

The City of Winnipeg has attempted to close Sherbrook Pool in the past. In the early 1990s, the pool was going to be demolished until Friends of Sherbrook Pool successfully lobbied for tri-government infrastructure funding to restore and improve the building. In 2012, the pool was abruptly closed for structural reasons

and didn't reopen until Friends of Sherbrook Pool again lobbied and obtained infrastructure funding, including \$1 million from the Kinsmen Club of Winnipeg. The pool reopened in 2017 and was renamed Kinsmen Sherbrook Pool.

Any reduction of public swim time will negatively impact recreational opportunities and residents' well-being. The City of Winnipeg needs to expand not reduce its operating budget for pools and other recreational facilities. Come to 381 Sherbrook Street on a weekday morning to swim and to show support for the neighbourhood's warmest pool.

Karen Mackintosh swims at Kinsmen Sherbrook Pool and is a former board member of Friends of Sherbrook Pool.

BUILDING COMMUNITY. from page 1

wanted to make a difference in a community — and the best way to do so was to live there.

“We lived on Victor for a number of years. And then when we wanted to buy our own house, we thought we wanted to buy as big of a house as we could find to kind of share life together with people. And then we came across a bunch of rooming houses on Spence,” said Travis. “We eventually bought the house that we are now living in.” In that era, rooming houses had a bad reputation: formerly a respectable low-cost mode of housing, by the 1990s rooming houses had become a way of warehousing the poor, explained Travis.

Their community-building adventure started with something people have gathered around for centuries: a meal. Each weeknight, Travis and Stephanie invited everyone in their rooming house to a community dinner.

“We wanted to be part of building or rebuilding a community, and that was what excited us,” Travis said.

Underlying this passion for community was their faith: “We’re Mennonites, and part of the Mennonite faith is to live out your faith together with people in community,” Travis said. “We’re not on the colonies, like the old school Mennonites used to be, but sharing life together with people is a good way to live.”

“Hard to love your neighbor if you don’t know em,” said Stephanie.

Another part of their involvement in the community is their role in Many Rooms Church: a group of house churches in the West End where people come together to worship in each other’s homes.

Within a few years, Travis and Stephanie had bought two more rooming houses across the street, and by 2019 they founded an official property management business — Five Stones — in order to start managing properties for other housing companies like New Life Ministries and Westminster Housing Society.

The name “Five Stones” was inspired by the Bible story of David and Goliath. They were “fighting homelessness with limited resources, and a lot of faith,” said Stephanie.

Since the first dinners in 1999 — which they continue to host every weeknight — they’ve started working with neighbours to organize com-

munity events like block parties and bonfires, and have held holiday gatherings for the tenants of their rooming houses.

“There’s a generosity that... wants to include neighbors,” said Marilyn Heidebrecht, a tenant at one of Travis and Stephanie’s properties who appreciated the opportunity to connect with other tenants in the area over a shared meal.

“I’m really grateful for the way that they create those spaces for communities so that we can actually get to know one another,” said Shira Gamey, another tenant, who noted the way the block parties connect the neighbourhood.

In late January, Travis and Stephanie hosted some tenant appreciation events, where tenants of properties they manage were invited to gather for a community dinner and raffle.

At the event, tenant Sheila Head said she loves the freedom to improve her residence through gardening, and Ruby Schuman appreciated the safety and security of her home.

In our interview, Stephanie was careful to note that while they are making an effort to do something with care and intention, they aren’t perfect and will always be able to improve.

“It’s not actually amazing that we would do a tenant appreciation day. She said despite tenants spending such a large portion of their income on rent, she hears of far more customer appreciation than tenant appreciation.

“Very often tenants are treated more as an inconvenience than customers who should be appreciated,” she said.

Another aspect of Travis and Stephanie’s community building is their continued involvement in the Spence Neighbourhood Association, an organization that works to improve housing, environment, local economy, and community spaces in the area.

“Over the years that we’ve lived here, either Steph or I have almost always been involved on the board,” Travis said.



Building community - one supper at a time

(Above) Approx. 2005: One of the early dinners hosted by Travis (4th from right) and Stephanie (holding daughter Rachel).

(Below) 2025: A recent dinner at the original rooming house that Travis and Stephanie moved into in 1999. (left to right): Marilyn Heidebrecht, Benjamin Letkemen, Stephanie Unger, Travis Unger, Rachel Unger, Luke Richison, Leo Sourisseau, Curt Friesen, Shira Gamey, Janell Friesen



As with all stories, Travis and Stephanie’s has not been one without challenges.

“As we’ve grown, we’ve bumped up into these different hurdles or barriers that we’ve had to overcome,” said Travis.

“Every time we’ve been part of a renovation project of any kind, it has always cost way more than we budgeted,” Stephanie said. “Every single time, during the process, the building codes and what is required of us have changed; and always added quite large expenses along the way.”

Rooming houses are considered commercial buildings which means they must follow the same guidelines as one — like apartments and office buildings. Because of these standards, simple maintenance can end up costing much more than expected.

“I think it involves a lot of perseverance, finding a way through to something we know is worth doing,” said Stephanie.

However, they said it’s

“very rewarding work.” Stephanie recalled a time when they were robbed, and “it was neighbors on our street who brought us something.”

And that generosity is reciprocal: tenant Linda Kork re-

called when she broke her ankle, and Stephanie brought meals to her third-floor residence.

“It’s very good work,” Travis said. “It’s meaningful work.”

Working for Wolseley

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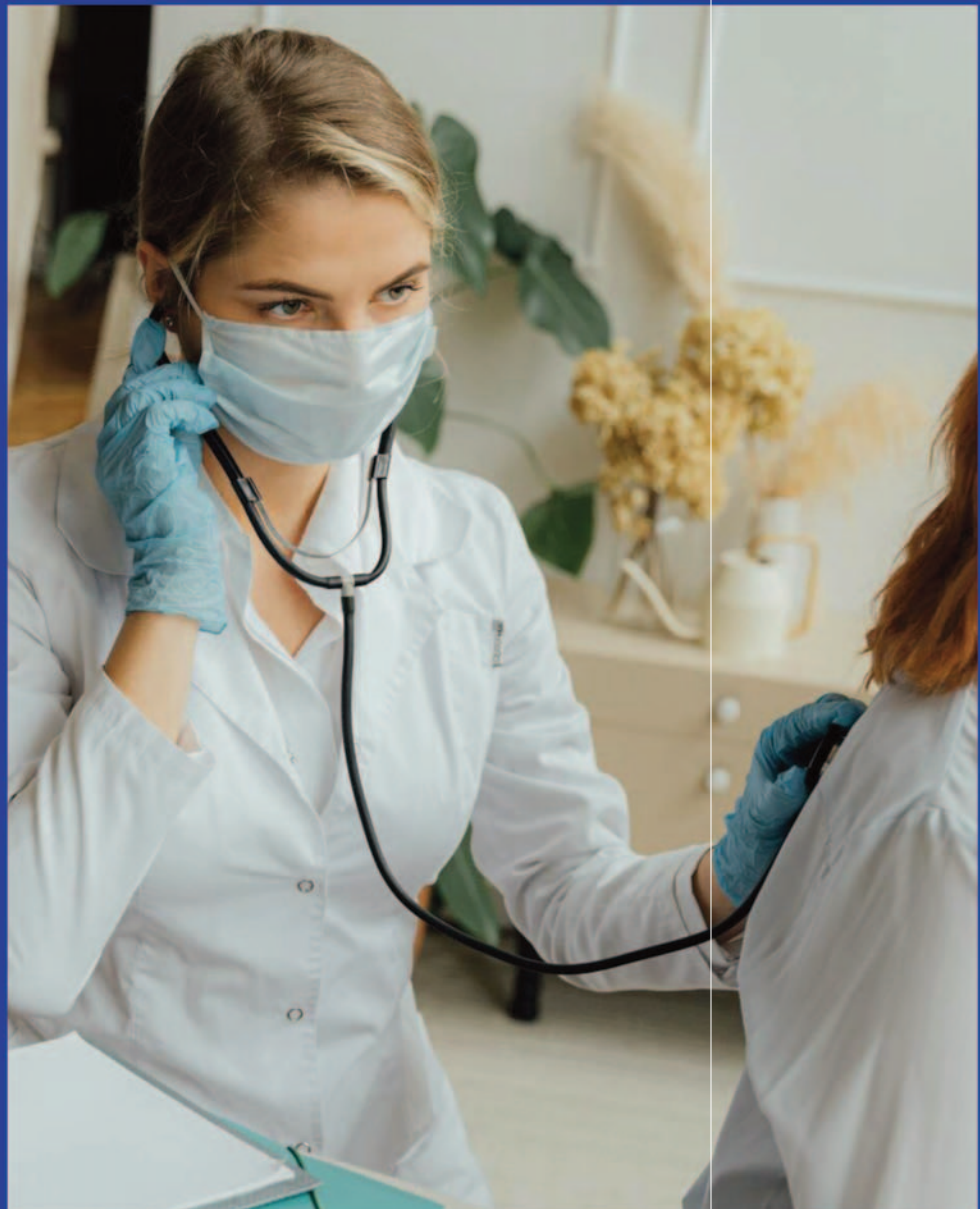
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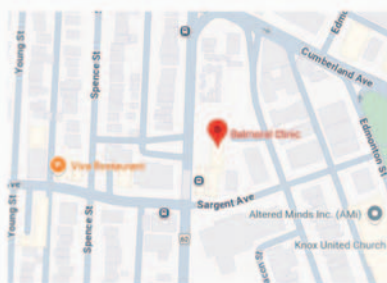
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