

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

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WHO WE ARE

Mission & Vision

Initiatives for Just Communities is a non-profit organization that is committed to restorative justice practices. IJC works to create communities where each person, particularly the stigmatized and the vulnerable, has a place to belong. We walk with people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and intellectual disabilities, and those currently or previously incarcerated, to help them to achieve a better quality of life for themselves and their communities.

Circles of Support
Accountability

El'dad

Open Circle

Touchstone



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This newsletter was produced on Indigenous lands where IJC works alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous families, staff, and communities. Our offices are located on Treaty 1 territory – the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Ininew, Anishinew, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.



Circles of Support & Accountability

CoSA supports individuals in Winnipeg with sexual offense histories who are integrating into the community after incarceration or serving probation or parole.



El'dad

El'dad supports adults with intellectual disabilities in the Eastman region. El'dad's programs include Residential, Home Share, Supported Cluster, Outreach, Day Program, Drop-In and an Alternative Justice Program.



Open Circle

Open Circle is a prison visitation program that matches trained volunteers with participants. Open Circle provides nonjudgmental support and long-term connection.



Touchstone

Touchstone supports adults with intellectual disabilities in Winnipeg. Touchstone's programs include Outreach, Supported Cluster, and Drop-In.



Visions & Voices (program of Touchstone)

Visions & Voices is a speakers' bureau comprised of adults with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. V&V uses storytelling to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and increase dignity for those living with FASD.

VISIT FROM MINISTER FONTAINE

Approximately 60 participants, staff and board members welcomed Family Services Minister Nahanni Fontaine to El'dad Ranch on April 1.

It was an afternoon of story sharing, touring the sweat lodge, and gathering around good food and a sacred fire. The Minister heard from IJC's Participant Advisory Committee and Tim Barron Jr. shared a drum song. Janet Plenert, Board Chair of MCC Manitoba, honoured the Minister with an MCC quilt, and IJC participants, Holly and Liz, presented the Minister with a traditional star blanket.



In February, IJC and seven other agencies from the Eastman region met with Minister Fontaine to discuss funding concerns and the need for clinical and specialized services for participants. Minister Fontaine's visit to El'dad Ranch provided an opportunity to gain firsthand insight into IJC's programming and needs.





IJC HONOURED BY CABINET MINISTER

On April 15, 2025, the Honourable Nahanni Fontaine acknowledged IJC in front of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. A team of IJC staff and participants were at the Legislature to receive the Minister's statement:

“A couple of weeks ago, our Families team had the incredible privilege of visiting Initiatives for Just Communities’ El’dad Ranch, a truly remarkable place changing lives every single day by supporting Manitobans with intellectual disabilities.

Through their Day and Alternative Justice Program, El’dad Ranch provides not just vocational training and education, but real pathways to self-determination and purpose.

Participants aren’t just learning new skills, they’re rediscovering their confidence, building meaningful lives and shaping a brighter, more inclusive future for themselves and their communities.

Care extends across a wide range of supports, including their Supported Cluster Program, Residence Program, Outreach Program, and Home Share Program, each one tailored with compassion, dignity and deep respect for where people are in their journey.

Whether someone needs 24/7 support or is working toward greater independence, El'dad ensures they are never alone, always supported and surrounded by kindness.

The heart of El'dad Ranch is its extraordinary staff. Their warmth, commitment and humanity are nothing short of inspiring. They lead with love and integrity, offering cultural supports like smudging, sweats, medicine picking and expressive arts. These are healing practices nurturing the spirit of participants.

I lift up some of these incredible leaders: Murray Still, Don Shackel, Kevin Drain, Jen Brisson, Trevor Utech, Kelly Woods and Tim Barron Jr. Your dedication is changing lives. You lead with compassion and Manitoba is better because of you.

And I want to give a very special shout-out to Meeko, who welcomed us so generously, shared his stunning artwork and allowed us to witness the incredible journey he is on. Meeko, I am so proud of you. Your strength, talent and pride in your story is truly moving.

Miigwech to everyone at El'dad Ranch and Initiatives for Just Communities. Your love, your compassion and your vision are making a real difference in the lives of Manitobans living with intellectual disabilities. You help them not just to live, but thrive.

The El'dad Ranch team joins us in the Gallery. I ask all Members of this House to join me in honouring and lifting them up for their extraordinary service and for the love they so generously give to our communities."

House broadcast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eiqdHJmCpA>





FUN FACT:

Did you know that snowpeople are said to bring good luck?

A CHRISTMAS OF CREATIVITY & CULTURE

Robert Lussier is a participant of IJC's El'dad Day Program.

This past Christmas, Robert shared joy, imagination, and teamwork with a festive holiday craft. With the support of staff members Marcelo, Tyrone, and Joseph, Robert brought his Christmas village to life – complete with snowmen, sparkling trees, two nativity scenes, and a chapel. Robert asked Joseph if he would help him design the Ghana flag and add it to his craft, proudly honouring Joseph's homeland and celebrating unity in diversity. The flag stands tall and vibrant beside the nativity, a reminder that love and celebration know no borders. Robert showed us that every act of kindness and collaboration can light up the world around us.

INSPIRATION:

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:16



OPEN CIRCLE

VOLUNTEER TRIBUTE

KEN & FRANCINE PERRETT

Open Circle has been blessed with the gift of two incredible volunteers. Ken and Francine Perrett have been long-time escorts and drivers for Open Circle and its events. The couple has generously donated their time to help at monthly coffeehouses in Winnipeg for many, many years. Their volunteer work goes far beyond Open Circle and their commitment to the participants and community at large has truly been invaluable.

Recently, the world became a bit dimmer when we learned of the passing of Francine. Open Circle is endlessly grateful for the dedication and warm memories of Francine, a person who lived a life of service and strong faith. She will be dearly missed.





TOUCHSTONE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DROP-IN CENTRE



SOCIAL OUTINGS

The Touchstone Drop-In continues to organize a variety of social outings. A recent highlight was going to see A Minecraft Movie at the theatre (the participants' choice!).

VOTING IN THE FEDERAL ELECTION

On election day, Drop-In staff visited four different polling stations with nine participants. For several people, this was their first time voting. The team went out for lunch afterwards to celebrate.



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Touchstone Drop-In participants will have the chance to see the Goldeyes play this summer. We're excited to spend some time outside and enjoy live baseball!

A PLACE TO REST

The Drop-In now has mattresses available for participants who wish to catch some sleep during daytime hours. This is part of the Drop-In's commitment to provide safe space for people experiencing homelessness.



IJC LEADERS ENROLL AT THE U OF M

This spring, ten IJC Managers and Coordinators enrolled in management and counselling courses at the University of Manitoba's Extended Education.



We asked Angela Godlewski about her experience studying at the U of M.

What is your role at IJC and how long have you been with the organization? Could you summarize some of the work you do?

I am the Senior Manager of Operations at IJC. I have been with IJC for 7.5 years. In my role, I oversee office operations, vehicles, maintenance, and IT. I strive to keep the office running smoothly in the day-to-day operations as well as provide guidance in office processes and find efficiencies and cost savings along the way.

"It seemed like a great opportunity to learn more about what is happening at the heart of an organization..."

What course(s) are you taking through the University of Manitoba?

I am currently enrolled in "Organizational Behaviour."

Why did you decide to enroll in these studies?

It was a pretty easy decision to make. It seemed like a great opportunity to learn more about what is happening at the heart of an organization, and to identify how we can further expand on the success we are seeing at IJC with the knowledge learned through this course.

What parts of the course content are you finding most interesting and relevant to your work?

I have found it has been interesting to explore the many different theories about organizational behaviour (there are a lot!). One of the most recent topics we explored was motivation, which is an important aspect of both our work and home lives. It has brought insight on what may impact motivation, both positively and negatively, and how we can work to isolate concerns and navigate forward.



What are you enjoying about the course so far? What are you finding challenging or surprising?

Learning ways to continue to grow and develop in areas such as teamwork, communication and leadership has been enjoyable! It has been challenging to balance work, home and school at times; however, there is a lot of support from colleagues also taking this course. Its been a pleasure to explore the course material with my colleagues and support one another in this venture.

Anything else you would like to share?

A big thank you to the Senior Leadership team, Bea Babel, and community supports like Steinbach Credit Union for all the energy, passion and investment that has been expressed and shared with those currently enrolled in courses across our organization. They have made it possible for us to partake in these opportunities and believe that anything is possible!

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

We're looking for open-minded and passionate individuals to join us!

WHY JOIN THE COMMITTEE?

- Help shape a more diverse, inclusive and equitable workplace
- Collaborate with colleagues from all backgrounds and experiences
- Develop leadership skills and gain valuable experience
- Contribute to various programming and events events that make a real difference

Join Now

Join us at our monthly virtual meetings to learn more about what we do and how we can contribute to making our workplace the best it can be!

✉ dei@initiativesjc.org

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR:

- **Passion** for promoting a healthy work environment
- **Open-mindedness** and respect of diverse viewpoints
- **Willingness to listen**, learn, collaborate and innovate
- **Curiosity** and a desire to ask questions, share ideas and participate in discussions

**LET'S CREATE A
WORKPLACE
WHERE EVERYONE
BELONGS &
FLOURISHES**

FROM THE KITCHEN OF

LAURA HARTFELDER



Laura is a participant of IJC's El'dad Outreach and Day Programs.

PERFECT FUDGY BROWNIES

Instructions

1. Heat oven to 325°F (162°C). Line bottom and sides of an 8-inch square baking pan with parchment paper or aluminum foil, leaving an overhang on opposite sides.
2. Add butter to a medium saucepan. Place over medium-low heat and cook until butter melts completely, then turn off the heat. Stay close, and do not let it brown.
3. While butter is hot, stir in the sugar, cocoa powder, vanilla, and salt. Stir well until blended. Don't worry if batter looks gritty. Once you add the eggs, the batter will become smooth.
4. Set the saucepan aside to cool until the mixture is warm, not hot, 5-10 minutes.
5. Add cold eggs, one at a time, stirring vigorously after each egg.
6. When batter is thick and well blended, add flour. Use a spoon to beat the flour into the batter until very thick and it pulls away from the sides of the bowl.
7. Stir in nuts or chocolate chips (optional).
8. Spread brownie batter evenly in prepared pan. It can be hard to spread because it is so thick.
9. Bake brownies until edges look dry and the middle is slightly underbaked, 20-30 minutes. A toothpick in the center should emerge somewhat moist with batter.
10. Cool completely before removing the brownies from the pan. For guaranteed perfect edges, chill the brownies in the fridge for 1 to 2 hours before slicing.

Ingredients

- 10 tablespoons (145g) unsalted butter
- 1 ¼ cups (250g) granulated sugar
- ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (75g) unsweetened cocoa powder, spooned and leveled
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 large cold eggs
- ½ cup (65g) all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- ⅔ cup (80g) chopped walnuts, pecans, or chocolate chips, optional

IJC BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Murray Still
Chair



Ken Friesen
Vice-Chair



Henry Friesen
Treasurer



Victor Mate



Shosana Funk



Darryl Loewen



Helen Peters

IJC SHARED LEADERSHIP TEAM



Don Shackel
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Kaylee Yoon
Director of Finance



Kelly Woods
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Brittany Pedden
Director of Human Resources



Christina Schmidt
Assoc. Director of Services



Trevor Utech
Assoc. Director of Services



Jen Brisson
Assoc. Director of CoSA & Open Circle

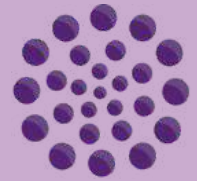


Allegra Friesen Epp
Executive Support & Strategic Analyst



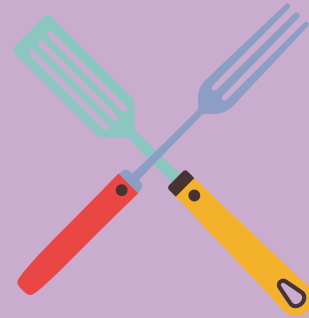
Angela Godlewski
Senior Manager of Operations

IJC BBQ



& Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, June 17, 2025



BBQ: 2-6:00pm

@ El'dad Ranch

(39136 Ridgewood Rd, Giroux)

AGM: 6:30pm

@ El'dad Mitchell Office

(315 Hwy 52W, Mitchell)

Community Members RSVP to:
info@initiativesjc.org

Winnipeg Office
(Touchstone, CoSA,
Open Circle)
201-1335 Erin Street
Winnipeg, MB R3E 2S7



Mitchell Office
(El'dad Programs)

315 Hwy 52 W
Mitchell, MB R5G 0Z2

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY

REFERRALS

referrals@initiativesjc.org

VOLUNTEER

(CoSA & Open Circle)
cosawpg@initiativesjc.org

JOB OPENINGS

Visit our Website:
www.initiativesjc.org



CONTACT US

 **Email:**
info@initiativesjc.org

 **Phone:**
204-326-1050

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