

2024-25 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared for IJC's AGM - June 17, 2025



*Harvested
willows lie on
the lawn at
El'dad Ranch,
ready for sweat
lodge
construction -
July 2024*

Initiatives 
for Just
Communities

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IJC Board of Directors



Murray Still
Chair



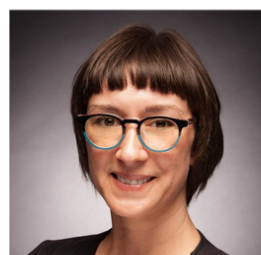
Ken Friesen
Vice-Chair



Henry Friesen
Treasurer



Victor Mate



Shosana Funk



Darryl Loewen



Helen Peters

IJC Shared Leadership Team



Don Shackel
Executive
Director



Kevin Drain
Director of
Services



Kaylee Yoon
Director of
Finance



Kelly Woods
Assoc. Director of
Case Management



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

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.

Values



Land Acknowledgment

IJC is situated on Indigenous lands where we work 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 on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

We are grateful to the host peoples who, for millennia, have stewarded the lands on which we work and live. We acknowledge the harms committed in the past and those that continue today. We dedicate ourselves to learning and listening, centering Indigenous voices and lived experiences, building relationships based on respect and collaboration, and addressing colonial attitudes and practices within our organization.

Message from the Board Chair

Murray Still



It is hard to believe, but a year has passed since you granted extension of my position as Board Chair for two additional years.

The Board is looking forward to our annual retreat this fall. We will discuss our vision for IJC in the coming years, and how we might get there. The Board has also formed a Recruitment Committee which is identifying ways to diversify our governance. It is an exciting time to be a part of IJC's Board.

This past year, IJC hired Brittany Pedden as Director of Human Resources. Following an audit of our HR policies and procedures, Brittany and the HR team have updated IJC's organizational chart and reporting lines to reflect our growing departments and management structures.

In December, IJC hired Kaylee Yoon as Director of Finance. Kaylee has strengthened IJC's financial systems and reporting structures, including developing a new budgeting system and leading budgeting learning sessions for all program managers.

IJC collaborated with seven other agencies in the Eastman Region that are also funded by Community Living disABILITY Services. These agencies met with Minister Nahanni Fontaine to advocate for funding for clinical and specialized services. The Minister then came to visit Association for Community Living Beausejour and El'dad Ranch.

Minister Fontaine's visit to El'dad Ranch was a very positive experience. We described how many participants were experiencing transformation in our sweat lodge and through the indigenization of IJC's programming. Our staff are working hard to complete a Circle of Care plan for each participant that is patterned after the traditional Medicine Wheel.

Minister Fontaine invited IJC staff and participants to the Manitoba Legislature, where IJC was publicly recognized and the Minister made special mention of a participant, Meeko. A special thanks to Meeko and Tim Barron Jr. for sharing your teachings with IJC.

In February, IJC staff and Board members met with the Warden of Stony Mountain Institution (SMI), who expressed support and appreciation for the work of CoSA and Open Circle. I commend Jen, Bam-Bam, and all the volunteers who sustain the work of these two programs.

IJC will continue to strengthen its connection with the Warden and SMI staff. CoSA and Open Circle are also collecting quantitative data to assist with funding proposals.

I hope you all have a chance to read the latest issue of IJC's newsletter. The more we share our story, the more people will be inclined to assist us in our journey of healing and transformation.

In closing, I commend all of our staff and volunteers for their excellent work over the past year. A special thanks to our Executive Director, Don, for his continued commitment to our vision of wholeness and leaving no one behind. All are loved and cherished for who they are.

I have one year left on the extension to my term as Board Chair. In that time, I look forward to advancing the movement of healing and transformation at IJC. May we be blessed in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Message from the Executive Director

Don Shackel

The past year held many exciting milestones and moments. As you read this report, I encourage you to reflect on the strength, dedication, and resilience of IJC's participants, families, staff, volunteers, board members, and community partners. I am deeply humbled by the ways each person contributes to IJC's mission and vision every day of the year.

IJC's participants, staff, and volunteers show an unwavering commitment to support one another to live good lives, face challenges, and move forward on our healing journeys. This commitment is in the big and the small gestures: a kind word, staying late to get a job done, the encouragement we give to others, and putting the needs of others first. All of these things make IJC the unique social services agency that it is.



Participants and staff strive to build on the strengths we all have, and to live lives of compassion, respect, care and kindness in all that we do. We realize that making mistakes is part of each of our journeys. If we can practice forgiveness and strive for growth and healing, we are on the right path to a more inclusive, healed and compassionate community.

In April, IJC participants and staff were acknowledged by Minister Nahanni Fontaine in the Manitoba Legislature. This special acknowledgment was the result of the Minister's visit to El'dad Ranch a few weeks earlier. It was truly inspiring to hear the Minister speak to participants and staff with such humility and compassion.



While at the Ranch, Janet Plenert, Board Chair of Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, presented the Minister with a handmade Mennonite quilt, and two participants, Holly and Liz, gifted the Minister with a ceremonial healing star blanket. I was deeply touched by these actions, which reflect a tremendous balance of respecting deep faith traditions and blending varied spiritual practices, including Indigenous ways of being and knowing. This non-dualistic approach is strength-based, person-centered, and central to the healing and reconciliation that happens every day at IJC.

The participants, staff, community partners, and funders who have touched my life over the past year are too many to name. I thank IJC's Board of Directors who are always there to listen and support. I commend everyone for their hard work and commitment to healing, growth, and learning. Your work is a tribute to what is good in the world and points to a positive future.



Please feel welcome to contact me about anything in this report. I always have time to listen and enjoy discussing how IJC can best meet the needs of our community. I look forward to an exciting year ahead!

Our Programs



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



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

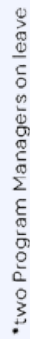


Touchstone supports adults with intellectual disabilities in Winnipeg. Touchstone's programs include Outreach, Supported Cluster, and Drop-In.



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.

Initiatives
for Just
Communities



Services Report

Kevin Drain, Director of Services

Over the past fiscal year, the Services Department has prioritized organizational growth, enhanced participant support, and integrated leadership development. Throughout the year, our Residential, Home Share, Cluster, Outreach, and Day Programs supported numerous new individuals. Numerous new hires were welcomed to meet increased demand, and a range of operational tools—including updated manuals, Circle of Care plans, and program templates—were rolled out to strengthen consistency and accountability.

Key accomplishments include finalizing major manuals, developing a Direct Support Professional Resource Hub, and launching updated training systems. We expanded leadership coaching under the "See, Stretch, Support" model, held regular Circle of Care planning meetings, and secured new program and participant funding, including approvals for cultural and Indigenous therapeutic supports. Our team enhanced supports with key proposals, including our first Cluster Home in Winnipeg. We have rolled out program templates to streamline documentation and integrated Finance, HR, and program operations into a more collaborative model.

624,008 km's

**driven annually while
supporting participants**

That's equivalent to:



**Circling the globe
15.6 times**



**Climbing Mt. Everest
70,517 times**



**Traveling to the moon
and 62% of the way back**

140

**Participants
Supported**

**Management Team
Focus Areas:**

**Case Management
Development**

**Integrating
Indigenous
Perspectives**

**Direct Intentional
Supports**

**Performance
Management &
Coaching**

**Enhancing
Teamwork between
Program & Case
Management**

We continue to strengthen quality assurance through structured performance reviews, implementation of goal tracking and staff development plans, and alignment of all program manuals with operational practices. Manual review groups and coordinator coaching sessions have ensured that policy matches practice. Case Management restructuring, ongoing leadership development, and collaboration with HR on annual reviews further enhance our ability to monitor and support services effectively.

Looking ahead, our focus will remain on supporting team development, reinforcing performance management structures, and advancing interdepartmental systems. The consistent integration of Indigenous perspectives, expansion of program-specific principles, and collaborative planning with our partners remain central to our vision of providing dignified, responsive, and holistic support to those we serve.

This year, we introduced a restorative justice approach to managing participant conflict and relationships, aimed at reducing the reliance on non-contact orders and minimizing criminal charges. We also focused on unifying Touchstone and El'dad to create greater alignment in care models, documentation, and best practices. Renewed emphasis on life skills development and transitional supports has been central to helping participants build independence.

CoSA & Open Circle

Jen Brisson, Associate Director

With ongoing funding support from Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, our Program Coordinator, Bam-Bam Anderson, has been moved to a permanent position within Open Circle and CoSA. Jen works full-time and Bam-Bam currently works two days a week.

We have been collecting data in both programs to reflect the connections we make each month with Corrections, Parole, Probation, participants, educational institutions, and other partners. Our goal is to track recidivism rates and present a more comprehensive analysis of data to potential funders, including the federal and provincial government. We are trying to balance quantitative data with narrative reporting in order to accurately reflect the work we do.



May 2025 - Jen's Data:

26

People visited at Stony Mountain Institution (SMI)

41

Volunteer hours in CoSA Circles

103

Attendees at CoSA/Open Circle Presentations

56

Attendees at coffee houses at SMI or in the community

Jen has been meeting monthly with Andrea Bevan, a psychologist who operates a private practice near Toronto. Andrea has contracted with Parole and Probation services for many years, providing group therapy and one-on-one risk assessments for individuals with sexual offenses. Andrea's expertise has been invaluable to our staff. She consistently brings conversations back to criminogenic factors and risk. Andrea has guided several responses to cases with participants in Winnipeg using in-depth research on treatment for individuals who commit sexual crime.

Indigenous Services

Don Shackel

When I arrived at IJC approximately two years ago, I noted the number of Indigenous participants at IJC. After spending many years in Indigenous communities, I am keenly interested in the ways agencies can incorporate First Nations' perspectives and practices into their services, and the ways First Nations and non-First Nations peoples can work together to address past and present colonial structures and systems.

With the unwavering guidance and direction of our Board Chair, Murray Still, IJC has wholeheartedly taken on this task. Incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and being is only enhancing the excellent services that IJC has always provided.

We began by partnering with Elder Bill Ballantyne and continue to work with Knowledge Keeper Tim Barron Jr. These individuals have been instrumental in assisting IJC on the path of reconciliation.

IJC's sweat lodge, medicine garden, and sharing circles have had a remarkable impact on the healing of both participants and staff. Reconnecting to the land has been a grounding experience for many people across IJC. I commend our staff as we all continue to learn about the innate connection between Indigenous identity and healing. Positive cultural identity and positive disability identity can change the lives of those we support.

“
IJC's sweat lodge,
medicine garden,
and sharing circles
have had a
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”



Since February 2025:

5

Sharing Circles

3

Land-Based Teachings

3

Sweats

30

1-1 Sessions

I want to give a huge shout out to our Indigenous Committee for their ongoing efforts to bring Indigenous knowledge and practices into IJC in good and healing ways. Our staff will be meeting with senior government officials in July to propose a regional Indigenous services model which we hope will be implemented in the near future.

As we continue our strategic planning at IJC, we are centering Indigenous knowledge and healing practices in all we do. I am confident these priorities will guide IJC well into the future.

Therapeutic Services Initiative

Kelly Woods, Associate Director of Case Management

IJC recently launched a new initiative in collaboration with Tim Barron Jr. The first phase (February 27 - April 21) supported nine individuals through one-on-one sessions. Tim also offered opportunities for broader community engagement through sharing circles, land-based teachings, sweats, and cultural healing events. A second round of therapeutic sessions began in May and welcomed an additional nine individuals. More sessions will continue in June and July.

Participant feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Individuals have reported an enhanced sense of positive self-identity and a stronger connection to their cultural roots. The program has also helped participants foster deeper relationships with others, promoting a deeper sense of community and shared healing.

Indigenous Committee Update

Dawn Bruce, Committee Chair



IJC's Indigenous Committee has facilitated numerous cultural activities since it began over one year ago. The committee has learned about traditional offerings as a means of giving back to Creator and others when seeking knowledge. As a result, we have constructed a medicine lodge to house gathered medicines. We have assembled donated medicine garden boxes and initiated the planting of our own medicinal plants.

Additionally, we hosted an open house for all IJC staff to foster greater interest and share our acquired knowledge with a broader audience. Our committee members have many exciting ideas and plans for the future, and we eagerly look forward to sharing them while continuing to deepen our cultural understanding and knowledge.



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Many participants have been directly involved in the creation of their plans, which incorporate their own beliefs and practices.

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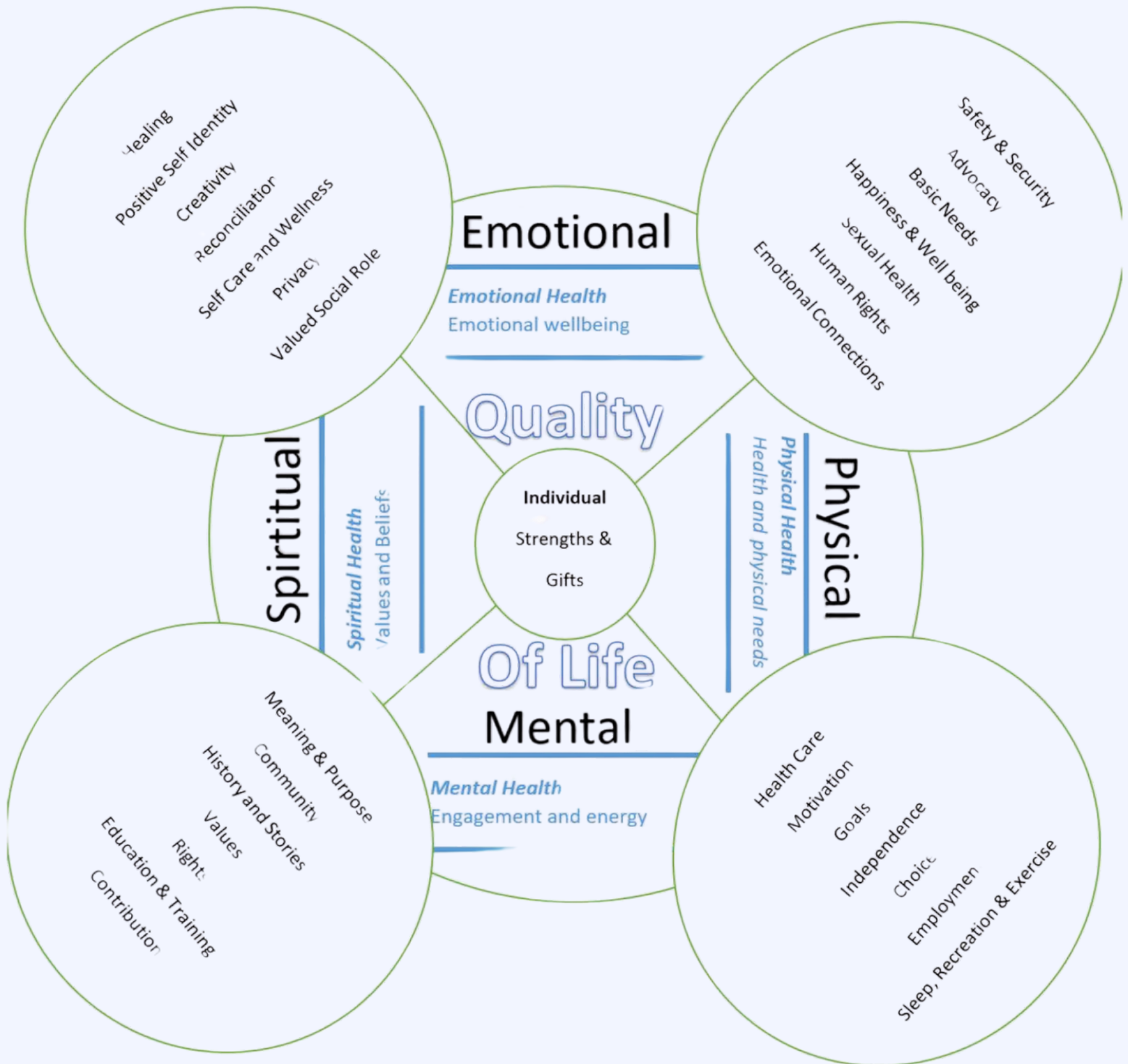
Circle of Care Plans

Support Plans Based on the Medicine Wheel

Circle of Care plans are being developed, implemented, and monitored for every participant at IJC. Some staff have also completed their own Circle of Care plan to ensure their life is balanced and holistic.

Many participants have been directly involved in the creation of their plans, which incorporate their own beliefs and practices. Through this person-centered approach, participants and staff are learning more about the disabilities and neurodiversities that participants live with. Together, we are setting goals and prioritizing training around FASD, Autism, ADHD, and intellectual disabilities. Our Case Management team is working to build staff and participant capacity around **Executive Functioning, Memory** (sensory, short-term, long-term, and working memory), **Sensory Integration**, and **Auditory Processing**. Circle of Care plans will be the vehicle to build capacity in these areas.

IJC's Circle of Care Plan



Reflecting on Pride Month

Shosana Funk, Board Director

This reflection was shared on May 27 at IJC's Board meeting

As we begin our meeting today, I wanted to take a moment to recognize that June is Pride Month - a time dedicated to celebrating the resilience, contributions, and identities of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other gender and sexually diverse people and communities.

Pride is both a celebration and a call to action. While it honours the progress made toward equality, it also reminds us that many 2SLGBTQ+ people still face systemic barriers, discrimination, and violence. It was only 38 years ago in 1987 that Winnipeg held our first Pride March, marking the provincial government's decision to include sexual orientation in the Manitoba Human Rights code.

It is wild and disheartening for me to realize that this occurred when I was 6 years old, the same age my daughter will be the year that the US has actively and harmfully taken away the rights and jeopardized the safety of 2SLGBTQ+ people, particularly those who identify as non-binary and transgender, with their legislation around gender recognition and gender affirming health care (among so many other actions they've taken that have had an impact on people's dignity, human rights and safety within the US and around the world).

IJC staff at the Winnipeg Pride Parade on June 1, 2025.



As leaders, colleagues and community members, allyship means not only standing with 2SLGBTQ+ people during Pride Month, but actively working year- round to create safe, inclusive and affirming spaces for the people in our lives and the folks that we support and service. IJC works with many people who have been oppressed or discriminated against, whether it be for their sexual orientation, race or cultural background, intellectual functioning or past behaviour. Allyship comes into our work every day and in diverse and varied ways.

True allyship is ongoing. It involves listening with humility, challenging injustice when we witness it, and using our voices, platforms and privilege to amplify those who are too often unheard. In a study by the Harvard Business Review, 2SLGBTQ+ people defined good allies to exhibit three qualities - acceptance, taking action, and having humility.

It is important to note that acceptance and the act of taking action (both to improve the climate around them and to improve themselves) were linked - those who were perceived to only do one of these things, were not as impactful or meaningful for 2SLGBTQ+ people as those who exhibited high levels of both acceptance and action. The research also showed that when people close to them took action, this had the highest level of impact on 2SLGBTQ+ folks' well being, such as positively impacting self-esteem, life satisfaction and lowering stress.

“Allyship comes into our work every day and in diverse and varied ways.”

I want to encourage everyone to let this month inspire us - not only to reflect on the significance of Pride - but to recommit to our values of equity, dignity, and respect for all people - values that align with those of IJC. May our work together today and every day be guided by a spirit of inclusion and shared humanity.



Statement from 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.

The Ministerial Statement on the next can also be viewed on [YouTube](#).

“

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.

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine, Minister of Families

April 15 2025

Initiatives for Just Communities El'dad Ranch

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.

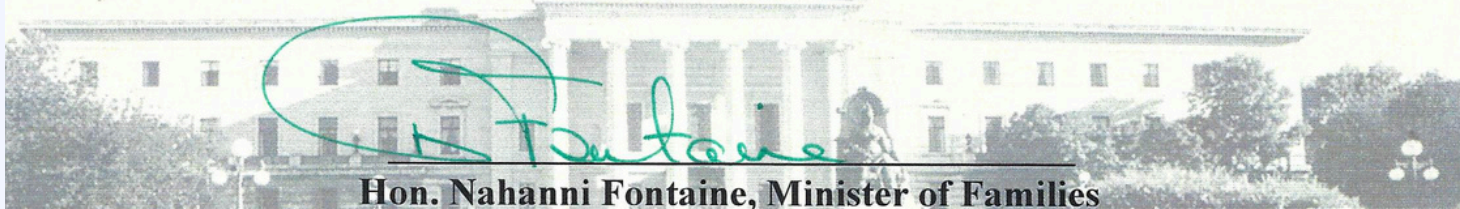
The heart of El'dad Ranch is its extraordinary staff. Their warmth, commitment and humanity are nothing short of inspiring. They lead with love and integrity, offering cultural supports like smudging, sweats, medicine picking and expressive arts. These are healing practices nurturing the spirit of participants.

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 join 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.



Hon. Nahanni Fontaine, Minister of Families

Finance Report

Kaylee Yoon, Director of Finance

In the last six months, the Finance Department has made significant progress in strengthening financial operations, improving internal controls, and enhancing efficiency.

Month-End Closures

The financial books for October 2024 through March 2025 have been successfully closed. This process required extensive time and effort, including reviews of financial processes, reconciliation of accounts, and correcting journal entries to ensure accuracy.

Payment Authorization Enhancements

A dual-authorization system has been implemented to strengthen internal controls and ensure timely processing of payments.

Budget Development and Distribution

32 budgets, representing each cost center, have been completed and distributed for the 2025-26 fiscal year. This comprehensive budgeting supports financial planning and accountability.

Expense Reporting System Update

We have transitioned from the ExpensePoint platform to an Excel-based expense reporting system. All invoices must receive approval from the relevant manager or supervisor prior to processing.

Chart of Accounts Simplification

The chart of accounts has been significantly simplified to improve clarity and streamline financial reporting. This change provides a clearer and more accurate financial picture for decision-making.

Staffing Update

Lisa Steen has joined the Finance Department as the new Accounts Payable Specialist. Lisa is strengthening the team's capacity.

Transition of Operations Oversight

The temporary oversight of the Operations team by Don has concluded. This responsibility has now been formally resumed by Kaylee, ensuring continuity and alignment with departmental goals.

Digital Transformation

We are transitioning from hard copy documentation to electronic formats, saving resources and administrative time while also improving document accessibility and storage efficiency.

Staff Empowerment and Development

Staff are being actively supported and empowered to take ownership of their processes. Weekly check-ins provide dedicated time for questions and guidance, and feedback is regularly provided on completed work. Staff are assigned project-based tasks, such as financial analysis and research, that move beyond routine data entry. Managers are included in relevant meetings and given opportunities to review and provide feedback on staff work.

Other Key Initiatives

- Continued support to the budget managers to enable more informed decision-making
- Review of Shiftspend process (petty cash distributed to staff for participant activities) to ensure timely distribution of funds and accurate reporting
- Cross-training on payroll processes in collaboration with Human Resources to ensure continuity and shared knowledge
- Review of Payworks, our payroll system, to ensure reports are easy to interpret and to minimize risk of system-related errors
- Review and approval of building maintenance and vehicle repair quotes
- Close monitoring of vehicle management and associated costs

Our next priority is to develop financial process manuals that are clear, well-structured, and easily accessible to staff.

Human Resources Report

*Brittany Pedden, Director of HR
& Jeannine Blanchette, Interim
HR Manager*

Over the last 12 months, the HR Team has been extremely busy with hiring, employee management, policy and process improvement and development.

Recruitment

- 64 new hires, including managing all the hiring for the new Winnipeg Cluster
- Countless employee terms, secondments, and promotions, including expanding the HR team
- Honed interview question sets
- Streamlined hiring process

Projects

- Provided Supervisors and Managers with Employee Relations and Performance Management training
- Refined job descriptions for all roles within IJC
- Reviewed and updated the Employee Handbook and developed an HR Manual

Ongoing

- Providing quality and timely service to all employees as it relates to employee relations, policy interpretations, processes and changes
- Accredited and specialized training of HR staff to enhance knowledge and skills

Next 12 Months

- Develop and implement performance appraisals for all positions within IJC
- Move manual paper-based processes to online and automated
- Increase knowledge of Payworks to reduce human errors and streamline processes



“

Core topics such as Approaches to Support Work, Boundaries, De-Escalation, Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, and First Aid made up the majority of the sessions

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Training & Development

Human Resources Team

Between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025, IJC delivered 90 internal training sessions, reaching approximately 700 total attendances across about 260 unique staff. Core topics such as Approaches to Support Work, Boundaries, De-Escalation, Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, and First Aid made up the majority of sessions, with crisis-related content showing the highest repeat attendance. Pilot modules in Skill-Support Training, Fundamentals in Support Work, and Connecting Social Roles, along with sessions on FASD and Cultural Proficiency, generated strong engagement and useful feedback.

In addition to in-house training, 10 staff enrolled in spring 2025 University of Manitoba courses—half in the Applied Counseling Certificate and half in the Applied Management Certificate. IJC is also supporting staff to attain specialized certification in Human Resources, Payroll, and Advanced Strategic Leadership and Management.



Extended Education

*Interview with Angela Godlewski,
Senior Manager of Operations*

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.

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

I am currently enrolled in “Organizational Behaviour.”



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

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. It's been a pleasure to explore the course material with my colleagues and support one another in this venture.

“It’s 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!

Partnership with MITT

*April Frobisher, Program
Manager & Trevor Utech,
Associate Director of Services*

IJC is partnering with Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology (MITT) to develop courses and micro-credentialing for IJC participants. At present, 26 participants from various programs have expressed interest in taking part.

We will begin with a Culinary Arts training program, which will consist of approximately 60 hours of combined hands-on experience and theoretical learning. Upon course completion, participants will be invited to cater IJC's annual BBQ's or Christmas banquets, partner with local restaurants and businesses for employment opportunities, or give back to the community through initiatives such as food delivery. We are excited to support participants as they achieve their goals and build meaningful connections within the industry and broader community.



*“At present, 26 participants
from various programs have
expressed interest in
taking part.”*



“

IJC is working with Therap to explore unique possibilities, such as having a collaborative space to work on profiles and circle of care plans.

”



Participant Record-Keeping

Jules Will, Program Manager

Trevor Utech, Associate Director of Services

IJC is exploring partnership with Therap, a robust case management software designed for agencies like ours. It is utilized by thousands of agencies in North America, with many states mandating its use. IJC is working with Therap to explore unique possibilities, such as having a collaborative space to work on profiles and circle of care plans. Therap is also a very secure platform. It can tightly control and track what information employees can or cannot access or edit.

Our first stage of testing will be within IJC's Home Share program where we will explore Therap's functionality and build a shift log template. After a testing period with feedback from Home Share Coordinators and Direct Support Professionals, we will decide whether to continue with Therap and whether to implement the software across IJC.



Staff Recognition

IJC would like to acknowledge staff with anniversaries ranging from 5 to 20 years at IJC (as of December 2025).

THANK YOU for your dedication and commitment to IJC's vision and our community!

Please note this acknowledgment is NOT exhaustive and only contains names of staff who gave permission to have their names listed.



5-10 Years

Elijah Badiola
Wayne Bojarski
Lianne Boudreau
Joanne Doerksen
Frank Domingo
Osayi Emokaro
April Frobisher
Kelsey Giesbrecht
Angela Godlewski
Ben Isbrecht
Eduardo Jimenez
Christine Kohl
Red Licarte
Brent McNaughton
Michelle Melquist
Bea Nesom
Charles Niyomugabo
Gwen Pylatiuk
Joe Sauvé
Carlanna Schultz
Kailey Schultz
Earl Unger
Jules Will
Darrell Wirch

15-20 Years

Caoimhin (Kevin) Drain
Harri Vallittu

11-15 Years

Bernadette Bouvier
Jen Brisson
Dawn Bruce
Kaila Sawatzky
David Schellenberg
Trevor Utech
Kelly Woods

20 Years at IJC

*Interview with Harri Vallittu,
Direct Support Professional at Touchstone*

What has inspired you in your work at Touchstone over the years?

When I was young and in my teenage years, I had people help me out. I was on my own for a long time, when I was quite young. And people came into my life and they helped me out. And I guess that made me realize that the most important thing we can give people is hope. And let them know that. No matter how tough things get, they've got a place to turn to. You're not alone... And that's important, but that takes trust. And trust takes time. And consistency.

I've gotten to know the people I work with, the participants in particular... and I see the growth. And it turns into something else. It's a friendship, but the boundaries are still there. [The participant] still real realizes I'm staff and I still realize that [they're] a participant of the program. But you know, it's all of the stuff we've been through. It turns it into something else...

“And I guess that made me realize that the most important thing we can give people is hope.”

What do you find challenging about your work?

When we first started, we used to do our case notes by hand. But half the people couldn't read their own writing. So that meant investment in computers and everything else... A lot of things are changing because of technology. The program continues to move forward. I don't like the idea of getting too big... Sometimes keeping it simple is much more accessible.



Back in the day [a participant and I] would hop in the vehicle and go out to Kenora. We had some marvelous times, taking photographs and doing all sorts of things. I called it a school on wheels. You really want to get to know somebody, go on a bit of a road trip. And then turn the radio off and talk. That was a sure way to do some natural healing. Get out in nature, get out of the city for a while, and experience something a lot calmer. But... we can't do that now because of [mileage] restrictions. Things are too expensive.

You've spoken before about the importance of taking time for people. Can you say more about that?

You have to spend time with [participants] in order to learn about them. I remember when I used to work with []. He was a political savant. And so I would always read the newspapers and political post stuff before I went on shift so I could talk to him about things. And with [], it's sports, the Jets and Bombers and things like that. You find out what [participants'] interests are, and then you try to learn a little bit more, and the more you learn, the more you become interested. And then the conversations just flow...

We have to understand everybody has a part to play, and personally, I don't think one person's part is any bigger than the other person's part. It's a collective team effort. It's almost like Jets hockey, you know? You can be a super hockey player, but you can't win the Stanley Cup by yourself.

"We have to understand everybody has a part to play, and personally, I don't think one person's part is any bigger than the other person's part."

Not everyone may know that you're a professional musician. What are you listening to or playing these days?

I go through different phases. I write my own music as well. I do that every day. I'm no longer performing... but that doesn't mean that's the end of playing music, far from it. I listen to a lot of different stuff. I've always enjoyed guitar players because I've played with them. So when I'm playing the piano, I'm thinking, okay, this would be a great guitar solo here, or if I'm thinking of a particular guitarist and their style, would it fit with this?

Lately, I've been writing a whole bunch of sambas, sort of Latin-influenced music.

If the readers of this AGM report tried to find you on YouTube, would they succeed?

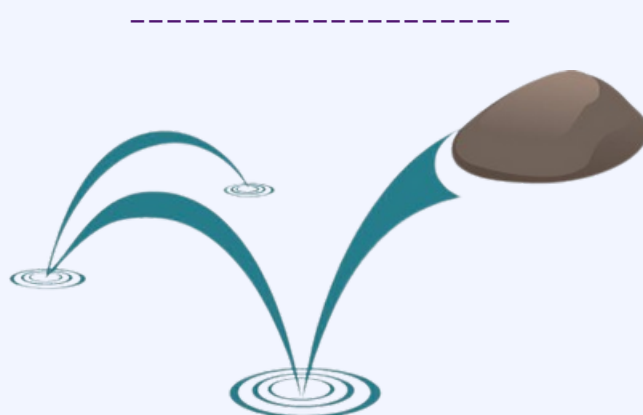
Yeah, actually. I'm on there with Deluxe Chance Band. I also toured with Blues musician B. B. King and played alongside actor Dan Aykroyd. And I was part of the band "Hounddog."



My years as a professional musician have really helped with outreach work. As a musician, you meet so many people with different outlooks on life, it opens you up. You develop skills, you get good at reading people, picking up on behaviours and social cues.

Some people know how to cook and bake, some people sew, some people can sing, some people can do all sorts of things that you think are not related, but that's where the mistake is. You'd be surprised how many other people are interested in those types of things. And if you don't even know that it's there, you can't share it and learn from it and experience and exchange ideas and things like that.... People have resources like you wouldn't believe... Everyone brings something to the table.

It's an ongoing thing, and sometimes people just need to be left alone too. It's the ability to be able to read a person without scrutinizing them... being intuitive about things, you know? ... As an outreach worker, one of the most important things is to have current, up-to-date, truthful assessments of what's going on in a person's life.



In Loving Memory: Randy Schultz

**Ben Isbrecht, Program Manager &
Bernadette Bouvier, Case Manager**

Randy was a dedicated Direct Support Professional who began working with IJC in 2006 in the Alternative Justice Program. For nearly two decades, Randy was a cornerstone of our community—steadfast, compassionate, and always ready to lend a hand.



Randy wasn't just a colleague; he was a friend, a mentor, and a quiet hero in the lives of so many. His generosity knew no bounds. Whether you had known him for years or just met him that day, Randy would offer his help without hesitation—be it for work, a personal favor, or simply a kind word. He had a way of making everyone feel seen and supported.

There are countless stories that capture Randy's spirit, but one in particular stands out. On a canoe trip with participants, a canoe capsized and gear floated downstream. Randy paddled tirelessly to retrieve everything. When it turned out the car keys were lost to the river, he simply smiled and made light of the moment. That was Randy—steady in a storm, always finding the silver lining.



Randy's legacy is one of kindness, resilience, and unwavering dedication. He made our workplace brighter and our lives richer. Though he is no longer with us, the impact he made will continue to ripple through our hearts and our work. We miss you deeply, Randy. Thank you for everything.

IJC's Committees

Committees enhance IJC's programming and strive to embody IJC's values. Committees are comprised of staff and participants who meet regularly to share insights, plan events, and bring proposals to IJC's Shared Leadership Team.



Events Committee

eventplanningcommittee@initiativesjc.org



Indigenous Committee

ijcindigenouscommittee@initiativesjc.org



Fundraising Committee

info@initiativesjc.org



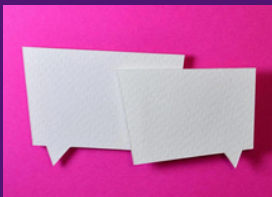
Safety Committee

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Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee

dei@initiativesjc.org



Participant Advisory Committee

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Thank you for your generous support of our work! We are so very grateful for your financial gifts that contribute to the ongoing growth of our programs.



Volunteers

Thank you to the 100+ volunteers who sustain the work of CoSA and Open Circle. Your visitations, circle meetings, and coffee house attendance mean so much to our staff and participants. Thank you for your time, energy, and dedication.

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