



Taking
Charge!



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ANNUAL REPORT

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Empowerment

Education

Employment

Empowered

Message from the Board of Directors & Executive Director

Dear Taking Charge! Community,

As we reflect on the past year at Taking Charge!, we are filled with gratitude for the collective efforts that have led to a year of significant achievements and growth. Our journey in 2023/2024 has been marked by milestones that have not only strengthened our organization but also enriched the community we serve.

We began the year with a commitment to deepen our understanding and respect for the land we occupy. We started on a journey to identify and develop our Land Acknowledgement. Through thoughtful dialogue, collaboration with Elder Carolyn Moar and a Listening Circle with our participants, we have developed a land acknowledgment that truly respects and honours the Indigenous lands on which we live, learn, work and play. This process has deepened our commitment to reconciliation and strengthened our relationships with the Indigenous communities we work with.

Education and cultural enrichment have been at the forefront of our activities. We introduced a variety of Indigenous programming for both staff and participants. We held an Indigenous Celebration Day, where we participated in traditional ceremonies and shared cultural experiences. We have invested in the professional development of the Taking Charge! team, ensuring that every member is equipped with the knowledge and skills to contribute to our mission effectively.

Another exciting development is our commencement of a comprehensive structural program review that will take place over the next year, which was generously funded by The Winnipeg Foundation. This review will provide valuable insights and guide our strategic planning and program development. It represents a critical step in ensuring that our services remain effective, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the single women, parents and families that we serve.

As we move forward, we are excited to continue building on these achievements. The support from our funders, donors, community, and partners has been instrumental in our success, and we look forward to another year of growth, learning, and positive impact.

Thank you for being a vital part of the Taking Charge! community. Together, we are making a difference.

Warm regards,



Stephanie Bevacqua
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Deb Radi
BOARD CHAIR

Board of Directors

Deb Radi *Chairperson*

Emily Cablek *Co-Chair (until April 2024)*

Liz Bilton

Mwaka Kaonga

Widny Pervil

Bobbi Taillefer

Land Acknowledgement

We are many nations within one nation. Taking Charge! acknowledges that we are located on the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Inineew, Anishininew, Dakota and Denesuline, and the homeland of the Red River Métis. We are committed to learning the truth in order to support reconciliation. Education is what got us into this, and education will get us out of it.

We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We acknowledge our access to clean drinking water sourced by Shoal Lake #39 & #40 First Nations of Treaty 3 Territory.

Taking Charge!

Programming

This year, Taking Charge! (TC!) has been filled with vibrant events and meaningful activities, fostering community spirit and personal growth among TC! staff and participants.

One of the highlights was Indigenous Celebration Day on September 20th. This special day began with a heartfelt pipe ceremony led by Elder Carol Moar and Knowledge Keeper Carole Frechette at the Oodena Circle. Participants enjoyed a delicious catered lunch by Feast Café & Bistro, followed by a trip to the children's museum. It was a beautiful celebration of culture and community that was enjoyed by all who attended.

In the week leading up to Truth & Reconciliation Day, we hosted lunch hour sessions presented by the National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation. These were broadcast for all staff, to offer an educational experience that culminated in an office-wide orange shirt day on September 29th, symbolizing our solidarity and commitment to reconciliation.

We held a Listening Circle which provided TC! participants with a safe space for reflection and dialogue that led them to include important wording for our Land Acknowledgement.

Staff also benefitted from a 2-day training program focused on Vicarious Trauma, Team Building, and Wellness Strategies. This training enhanced our team's skillsets and well-being, equipping us to better serve our community.

Throughout the year, our Rediscovering Myself program participated in engaging presentations from the Louis Riel Institute, which included

a popular beading workshop, and the Public Interest Law Centre. Our participants also had presentations and support from Employment & Income Assistance.

Taking Charge! of Opportunities saw participants enjoying an Urban Circle tour, learning macramé with Kim Boss, and delving into a Metis History lesson, all of which were met with enthusiastic feedback.

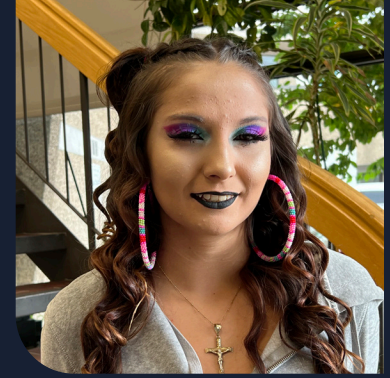
Paving the Way included inspiring guest speakers like Natasha Voss, a former participant now working as an employment service support worker, and Elder Florence Paynter, who spoke on Treaty Rights. Participants also enjoyed a Bannock Workshop with Rod Salinas and the Futures Forward Workshop, offering resources for those previously in care, including post-secondary funding.

We served
173
participants

Finally, our team gave back to the community by volunteering at Siloam Mission, demonstrating our commitment to service and community support.

Each of these activities has contributed to a year of success and joy for Taking Charge!, reinforcing our mission to empower and uplift our community. We look forward to building on these successes in the coming year.





Kyla's Story:

A Journey of Triumph and Transformation

Hi, my name is Kyla. I am 22 years old and currently have no kids of my own. I'm writing this to share my story of how I conquered the darkness of my journey and found the faith and light within myself to create a new path.

Growing up was not easy for me. I lost my mother at the age of 1, dealt with abuse and being sexually assaulted for three years, and was neglected by my dad and his new girlfriend. From ages 1–6, my great-grandma raised me. She taught me my ABCs and 123s and ensured I ate healthy. My dad lived with us, but he was often drinking and playing guitar with his friends late at night. When I turned 5, my dad had another baby with a new partner, and soon after, my great-grandma had to sell our house. I moved in with one of my dad's aunties, where I faced three years of abuse.

Despite these challenges, I persevered. I moved in with my dad and his new family, started volunteering at a daycare, and tried to maintain good grades. However, junior high brought new struggles, and eventually, CFS got involved, moving me to a group home. This period marked a downward spiral into heavy drug use and instability. I struggled with addiction for seven years, went in and out of treatment, and faced numerous challenges, including an abusive relationship.

The turning point came in May 2022, when my ex-boyfriend left me after an abusive episode. Shortly after, I lost my great-grandma and my best friend to addiction. I reached a breaking point and decided to change my life. In April 2023, I committed to sobriety, motivated by a profound spiritual experience and a renewed sense of purpose.

I started doing research on certain things and learning about the universe and God, and how to have faith and keep the faith within myself to do better and stay motivated, I recall. This journey led me to contact my EIA worker, who introduced me to Taking Charge!

I am immensely grateful to Taking Charge! for giving me the opportunity to participate in their programs, from Rediscovering Myself to Taking Charge! of Opportunities, Paving the Way, and Taking Charge! of Academics. Their support has been instrumental in helping me work towards my mature diploma at the Winnipeg Adult Education Center. This program has been transformative for me, providing the structure and guidance I needed to help rebuild my life.

I feel as if I have gained so much confidence and strength being here at Taking Charge! They have been so supportive, helping me and guiding me into a better version of myself. It's all I've been praying for—to be on a better path and make a better life for myself.

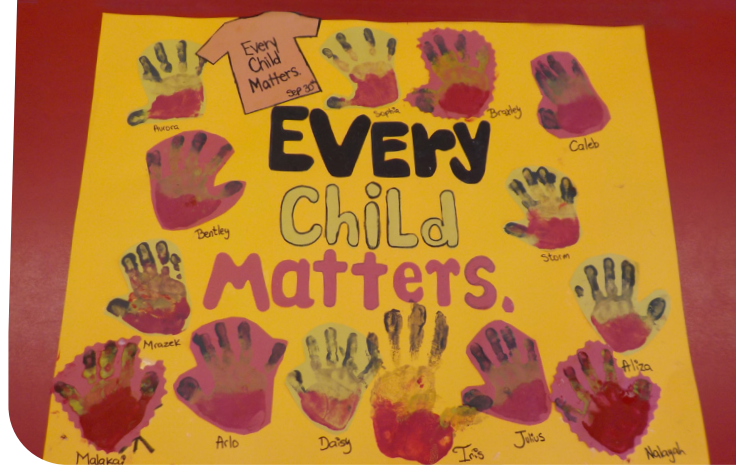
Now, one year sober, I am living a life aligned with my higher purpose. I attend school every day, stay focused on the positive, and navigate life's challenges with a clear mind and a determined spirit.

I'm changing day by day into more of a positive person, releasing the negative chains I once used to be tied down with.

Living my fullest potential is my goal, and I am committed to staying on this journey, with my head held high, my crown straight, and my vision clear.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

Kyla



Taking Care! Programming

At Taking Care!, we celebrate diversity, inclusion, and individuality. We embrace each child's unique strengths, interests, and cultural backgrounds, creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

Over the past year, we've taken significant strides towards promoting diversity and inclusion within our center. Through a very generous grant from the daycare office, we were able to introduce new materials, books, and activities that celebrate the cultures, backgrounds, and experiences that make each child unique. Through these initiatives, we foster a sense of belonging and respect for each and every child we provide care for.

We know that it takes a village to raise a child so we strive to create a collaborative approach to childcare by creating a partnership with parents, to ensure that every child receives the support and encouragement they need to reach their full potential. This past year we were lucky enough to have been able to coordinate exciting field trips for parents and their children. As an organization, everyone went to a fun filled educational day at the Assiniboine Park Zoo. We had 76 participants, children and staff at the zoo and we enjoyed lunch together as an organization. It was a very fun-filled

day for everyone and we cannot wait to do it again this coming summer.

The children also participated in our Indigenous Celebration Day where we attended a pipe ceremony at the Forks. Following this, the children enjoyed a nutritional lunch and had a fantastic time building a tipi at the Children's Museum, sharing stories inside of it, and engaging in arts and crafts.

Annually, at Halloween, we take the children 'Trick or Treating' throughout the organization so all the staff and participants get to hand out treats. We saw some great costumes and the kids received candy and other fun items! Our ever-popular Holiday Celebration is always a hit with breakfast, pictures with Santa, and a personalized present for each child. We also have door prizes for the parents and this year our entertainment was the Bubbleman! He was a huge hit with all the children and adults.

We want to express a **sincere thank you** to our community for supporting the Taking Care! fundraisers. This year we did Kernels popcorn, Peak of the

Market, Sausage Makers Delicatessen and Bothwell Cheese. All of the funds raised went to great initiatives such as unique field trip experiences for the children.

Over the past year, we focused on trainings and experiences that equipped all of our staff with the knowledge and skillsets that provided the highest quality of care and education to each and every child.

As we reflect on the successes we had over the past year and look ahead to the future, we are excited about how we will further nurture bright futures and empower the next generation of leaders, thinkers, and dreamers.

**We cared for
118 children**

**We served
243 lunches
473 snacks**

Grants & Fundraising

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our donors for their incredible support over the past year. Your contributions have made a significant impact on our programs and services, and we are deeply appreciative of your commitment to our mission. Here are the key ways your donations have helped:

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA, DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES:

- Journey to Independence – Counselling Service Program: Enabled us to provide essential counselling services, empowering individuals towards self-sufficiency.
- Pest Control Grant: Funded vital pest control services, maintaining a safe and healthy environment.

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA, EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD:

- Quality Early Learning and Environments Grant: Enhanced our early learning programs, benefiting many children and their families.
- Innovative Recruitment and Retention Grant: Supported innovative strategies to attract and retain talented staff members.
- Enhancing Diversity and Inclusion Grant: Promoted diversity and inclusion within our organization, enriching our community.



CANADA SUMMER JOB GRANT: Facilitated the hiring of summer staff, boosting our programs during the peak season.

CO-OP COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND: Provided gift cards for our breakfast program, ensuring participants start their day with a nutritious meal.

COMMUNITY SERVICES RECOVERY FUND: Supported by the Red Cross, this grant helped with onboarding new staff, training, mentorship, and HR activities.

CRANKED ENERGY BARS: Donated 100 protein/energy bars, helping our adult participants focus on personal development without worrying about hunger.

ANONYMOUS DONOR: Your quiet yet impactful generosity has been crucial to our success.

THE WINNIPEG FOUNDATION: Your ongoing support has been instrumental in sustaining our programs.

Thank you once again for your unwavering support.

Together, we are making a significant difference in our community and empowering individuals to achieve their full potential.

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