



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

2026



Empowerment
Education
Employment
Empowered

Message from the Board of Directors & Executive Director

Dear Community Members, Partners, Supporters, and Friends,

As we reflect on the past year at Taking Charge!, we are filled with gratitude, pride, and optimism for the future. Every day, we witness the resilience and determination of the women and single parents who walk through our doors seeking new opportunities, and a chance to build a brighter future for themselves and their families.

The stories of transformation we see each year remind us why this work matters. Whether it is a participant returning to school after many years, a parent gaining confidence in their abilities, or a graduate continuing into post-secondary education or employment, these successes are made possible through the strength of community.

We are thankful to our dedicated staff, Board of Directors, funders, donors, and community partners whose ongoing support allows Taking Charge! to continue responding to the evolving needs of our participants. Your commitment helps create a welcoming environment where individuals feel empowered to learn, grow, and thrive.

As you read this annual report, we invite you to celebrate the accomplishments and stories that define Taking Charge!. Together, we are helping build stronger families, healthier communities, and brighter futures.

Sincerely,



Lise Leflour
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Widny Pervil
BOARD CHAIR

Board of Directors

Widny Pervil	<i>Chairperson</i>
Debra Radi	<i>Past Chairperson</i>
Danielle Dorge-Rempel	<i>Secretary</i>
Florah Manyimbiri	<i>Treasurer</i>
Liz Bilton	<i>Member</i>
Tammy Robinson	<i>Member</i>

Land Acknowledgement

We are many nations within one nation. Taking Charge! acknowledges that we are located on the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Ininew, 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



For over 30 years, Taking Charge! has remained committed to breaking cycles of poverty and creating pathways toward education, employment, and self-sufficiency. Every participant who walks through our doors begins a journey of growth, resilience, and renewed opportunity.

That journey starts with our self-development programming, which lays the foundation for success in both mature Grade 12 completion and post-secondary education. Through this programming, participants gain a deeper understanding of the personal barriers they face, including the trauma and challenges connected to earlier school experiences. By helping adult learners rebuild confidence and discover the tools they need to succeed, we empower them to move forward with purpose and determination.

To support participants throughout this important stage, Taking Charge! provides onsite daycare for their

children as well as access to personal counselling services.

After completing the self-development program, participants begin working towards their mature Grade 12 at our onsite Adult Learning Centre. Guided by our certified in-house teacher, they begin their first four high school credits. Afterwards, participants continue their studies at the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre, where they complete their mature Grade 12 and prepare for the next chapter of their educational journey. Our Career Counsellors continue to support our participants as they transition into post-secondary education or

employment. They provide support with applications, proposal writing, enrolment, and funding.

We are incredibly proud of the achievements of our students and remain committed to maintaining those connections long after graduation. To celebrate and strengthen our growing community of graduates, we are excited to launch an Alumni Project next year. In the following pages, you'll read updates and success stories from past participants, and we are proud to share and celebrate their journeys. Stay tuned for more details.

105
Single parents &
women served

19
participants
graduated or
upgraded their
Mature Grade 12

74%
Successfully
completed
career planning
with goals for
near-future
post-secondary
education or
employment.

Post-secondary
institutions
to which our
participants
were accepted:

- Red River College
- Robertson College
- University of Winnipeg
- University of Manitoba
- Urban Circle



Jolene's Story

From Losing Myself to Finding My Future

When I first walked through the doors of Taking Charge in March 2022, I was 35 years old and completely lost.

I was two and a half years out from a difficult split with my children's father, navigating life as a single mother of three young kids. If I am being completely honest, I did not know who I was anymore. Every single day was a battle.

I was deeply struggling with the daily routines of parenting, feeling overwhelmed by the weight of raising my family alone, and I had absolutely zero confidence in myself, especially when it came to my education.

But Taking Charge saw something in me that I could not see in myself yet.

I started at the very beginning, taking things one step at a time. I began with Rediscovering Myself, which was exactly what I needed to start healing and figuring out who I was outside of just being a mom. From there, I kept pushing forward, completing Taking Charge of Opportunities, Living Well over the Summer, and Paving the Way. Step by step, workshop by workshop, my foundation was being rebuilt.

Eventually, I felt ready to take a massive leap. I started Taking Charge of Academics. But life does not always have a smooth storyline. Just three weeks into the program, I became incredibly sick. On top of that, some deeply painful personal challenges affected my family. I realized I had to make the difficult choice to step back, put my education on pause, and dedicate all my energy to my mental health and my three beautiful children.

What makes Taking Charge so special is that they never close the door on you. They do not give up on you when life gets messy.

In November 2024, I finally came back. I walked through those doors again, picked up right where I left off, and officially completed Taking Charge of Academics. That was the spark that changed everything. Empowered by that victory, I took the next big step and enrolled at the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre in September 2025 to pursue my Mature High School Diploma.

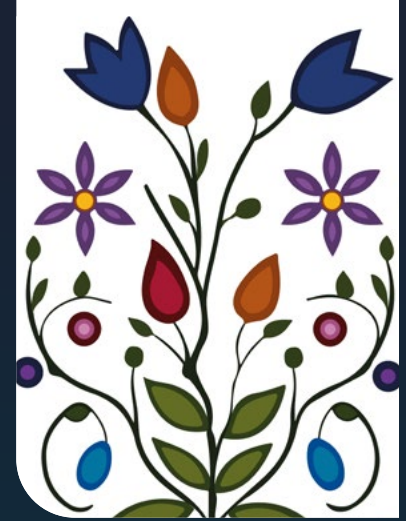
I am incredibly proud to share that, as of April 20th of this year, I have officially completed Grade 12.

The journey does not stop there. This coming September, I will be attending Red River College to pursue a diploma in Business Administration. I went from a mother who was once terrified of the classroom to a woman with a clear career path and a bright future.

I did the work, but I did not do it alone. Every single staff member at Taking Charge has played a meaningful and unforgettable role in who I am today. You did not just teach courses; you provided a safe haven. You gave me grace when I needed to step away, a cheering section when I returned, and the tools to build a stable, structured, and happy life for myself and my kids.

Jane's Story

Taking a Chance, Changing a Life



Jane entered Taking Charge! in August 2024 at age 42 with a Grade 6 education, no prior work or volunteer experience, and four children, including a young son with possible developmental delays.

Having previously attempted to return to school several times without success, Jane was initially anxious and overwhelmed by the idea of returning to a classroom. She had first connected with Taking Charge! in 2011 but did not continue at the time due to feeling intimidated by larger class sizes. Years later, after seeing a Facebook advertisement, she decided to try again because of the program's onsite childcare and supportive environment.

The onsite daycare became a major source of comfort for Jane, as she worried about how her non-verbal son would adjust to childcare. Knowing he was in the same building and supported by understanding staff helped her feel safe and able to focus on her own goals. Over time, she saw significant growth in her son's development. By the time he completed the daycare program, he had become more verbal, formed strong connections with staff, and gained confidence socially. Jane shared that he still asks about the daycare staff and that his speech and comfort around others improved greatly during his time there.

Jane also found reassurance in the program's smaller classes and in being surrounded by women with similar life experiences, which helped her feel accepted and less isolated. Before entering the program, she described feeling depressed and withdrawn after spending years at home focused entirely on caring for her children. Taking Charge! gave her a sense of community, confidence, and purpose outside of the home.

Jane began in Personal Development, where she focused on wellness, self-care, and rebuilding her confidence after years of putting her children's needs before her own. Although academics had always caused her anxiety in the past, staff encouraged her to recognize her strengths. She quickly became a leader among her peers, often helping

classmates understand assignments and coursework. With support from instructors and career counsellors who consistently believed in her abilities, Jane gained the confidence to continue pushing herself academically.

She transitioned into mature grade 12 classes in February 2025, where she maintained grades above 90 percent and achieved one of the strongest attendance records among her cohorts. After completing computer training in summer 2025, Jane moved on to the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre and completed four credits on an accelerated timeline, graduating in January 2026 with marks in the high 90s.

Jane then enrolled into Urban Circle's Family Support Worker program. Although she still experiences moments of self-doubt, she continues to persevere and is proud of accomplishing goals she once believed were impossible. Coming from a family where few had completed school, Jane never imagined herself earning a diploma or attending college in her 40s. She now hopes to work supporting single mothers and families by helping them access resources and navigate systems of support.

Jane credits Taking Charge! with changing both her life and her children's lives. She shared that the program helped her overcome isolation, build confidence, and believe in herself for the first time in many years. The support she received not only helped her complete her education and pursue post-secondary studies but also created a more positive and stable future for her family.

For other mothers, women, and parents considering Taking Charge!, Jane says "Go for it, take the chance because Taking Charge! is a great place to be, and so supportive, friendly and caring."

Where are they now?



REBECCA, COMPLETED 2019

"As a single mom of five kids, I never imagined the life I'm living today — I got my grade 12, went to university and have a successful career. Now I'm off EIA and can support my five kids — and it's all thanks to Taking Charge!"



LEAH, COMPLETED 2022

"Taking Charge! has made a huge difference to me financially. I'm able to support myself and my son, to afford a vehicle, and I'm saving up for a house. We go camping and recently went on a Dominican vacation — I finally have the quality of life I once dreamed of!"



ALLYSON, COMPLETED 2025

"I grew so much over the course of the program. I went in with nothing: no education, no resume, and not much of a social life either. It really changed my life. I was able to volunteer and build my resume. Now I have my grade 12 and I got amazing grades — I couldn't believe it! Because of Taking Charge! I now have a social life; my kids are thriving. And I'm off EIA and working full time. Once my children are older, I will go to university and pursue a meaningful career."



KYLA, COMPLETED 2025

"I feel educated, and I feel like I can breathe now. I've gone through a lot of dark times in my life, and I needed the support that was provided by Taking Charge! Now I'm taking my first year in Education at the University of Winnipeg and on my way to being a teacher. Imagine going from being a dropout to becoming a teacher! The Creator sure has a plan for me; I never would've believed this would be my journey."

Kyla is the proud recipient of the Personal Achievement Senior Award at the 2025 Manitoba Indigenous Youth Achievement Awards.



Taking Care! Programming

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

We believe 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.

Taking Care! provides quality care to the children of Taking Charge! participants and single parents enrolled at the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre. Our dedicated educators strive to create a home away from home for every child entrusted to our care. Through play-based learning, personalized attention, and child-focused activity planning, we strive to empower young minds to explore their curiosity, develop essential skills, and build a solid foundation for future success. With so many children enrolled throughout the fiscal year our educators are constantly observing and adapting their programs to better attend to the needs of the children and parents.

This past year we continued our focus on professional development for our educators, so they can better care for the children and support the parents

who attend the centre. For the parents, we offer a connected parenting approach through workshops facilitated by our daycare supervisor, which allows her to create stronger connections with the parents of the children in attendance. The Circle of Security (COS) workshop encourages being with children through all their emotions to help them learn self-regulation, and Guiding Children Using COS Principles gives parents and caregivers real-life examples and discussions on how to guide children while being with them in their feelings. We also spruced up some of our weathered outdoor equipment and added some fun climbing features that the children enjoy immensely.

As we celebrate the successes over the past year, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, supportive families, and the wonderful children who fill our days with joy and discovery.

**We cared for
101 children
benefited from
our programs
this year.**

**44 children
joined our
centre for the
first time.**

**Together, we
served 720
healthy meals
and snacks**

Tribute to Jackie Lavallee

Sadly, in May 2025, Taking Charge! lost former longtime Executive Director Jackie Lavallee. Jackie served as Executive Director from 2000 to 2018 and guided the organization through many periods of change, including funding challenges, relocations, and program restructuring.

Jackie was deeply committed to supporting women and families in the community. She founded organizations and served on numerous boards. She generously shared her own experience as a single parent with participants, making her both relatable and inspiring. Jackie celebrated every participant's success, especially graduations. Many also remember her love of cooking and the gingerbread cookies she proudly shared each year.

Her leadership, compassion, and dedication left a lasting impact on Taking Charge! and the many lives she touched.



Leadership Team

Lise Leflour	Executive Director
Pamela Stewart	Client Services Manager
Jada Byrne	Manager, Taking Care!
Allyson Greenhalgh,	Supervisor, Taking Care!

2025-26 FUNDERS

- Women and Gender Equality – Canada
- Province of Manitoba – Department of Families
- Province of Manitoba – Education and Early Childhood Learning
- Winnipeg Foundation
- Red River Cooperative Ltd.
- Numerous donations

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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