

July 2021

Summer Issue

PARATRACKS

Newsletter of Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba Inc.



Proud History | Vibrant Future

In this issue:

- * Save the Date for Our 75th Anniversary Virtual Celebration, pg. 5*
- * On the Road Again: A Member's Path to Driving, pg. 6*
- * The Search Begins After Educational Training, pg. 14*
- * Vehicles for Hire: Accessible Service Improvements, pg. 17*



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825 Sherbrook Street
Winnipeg MB R3A 1M5

Tel: 204-786-4753

Fax: 204-786-1140

Toll-free: 1-800-720-4933

(within Manitoba only)

Email: info@scimanitoba.ca

Website: www.scimanitoba.ca

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*SCI Manitoba extends its sympathies to the
families of the following loved ones who
recently passed away:*

Donna Alexander

Yvonne Belanger

Edward Clarke

Christina Drury

John Eisner

Clem Gervais

Marvis Maslow

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Dean Woods

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**What would you like to see in future issues
of ParaTracks?**

We try our best to publish articles and stories that are of interest to you, our members. To ensure we continue with this practice, we need your help. Without feedback from SCI Manitoba members, we can't always be sure that we're providing you with the information you require.

Please take a moment to provide us with your feedback. Was there an article that was of great interest to you? What did you like about this issue of ParaTracks? What didn't you like?

Please send your comments by email to Adrienne Conley at aconley@scimanitoba.ca or info@scimanitoba.ca or by phone 204-786-4753 or 1-800-920-4933 (toll free within Manitoba), ext. 222.

Did You Know....

That if you have something to sell, trade or give away, and you are an SCI member, you can place a classified ad for free in ParaTracks? For information, contact Adrienne Conley at aconley@scimanitoba.ca or 204-786-4753, ext. 222.

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COVID-19 And SCI Manitoba

Effective March 19, 2020, Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba suspended in-person meetings and closed our office to comply with the recommendations of our federal and provincial governments, in an effort to help slow and stop the spread of COVID-19.

Despite this disruption, we continue to work remotely so you can still reach us by calling **204-786-4753** (toll-free within Manitoba **1-800-720-4933**) for any need for support or assistance you may require that is not an emergency. We can be reached by email at the email addresses listed below.

Although we hope to re-open our office soon, we intend to continue following the guidance from health experts and Canadian SCI health specialists and will be providing regular updates and additional resources on our website at www.scimanitoba.ca.

If you have health-related concerns, please contact:

- Health Links at **204-788-8200** or toll-free **1-888-315-9257** for COVID-19 concerns and other health issues;
- your doctor; and/or
- if it's an emergency, call 9-1-1.

We value our members and we are here to help support you through these unfamiliar circumstances.

We encourage you to stay at home and follow the health authorities' directions to keep healthy.

Please visit the following website for recommendations and factsheets for persons with SCI regarding COVID-19 from around the world: www.iscos.org.uk/covid-19-resources-

Staff Email Addresses and Phone Extensions

204-786-4753 or 1-800-720-4933 (within Manitoba only)

Dan Joannis	Interim Executive Director	djoannis@scimanitoba.ca	224
Darlene Cooper	Director of Rehab. Services / Assistant Executive Director	djcooper@scimanitoba.ca	225
Adrienne Conley	Executive Assistant	aconley@scimanitoba.ca	222
Denise Balliet	Accounting Officer	dballiet@scimanitoba.ca	221
Gail Burnside	Rehab. Counsellor, Hospital Services / Assistant Director of Rehab. Services	gburnside@scimanitoba.ca	229
Natasha Schreyer	Rehab. Counsellor, Transitional Services	nschreyer@scimanitoba.ca	227
Laurence Haien	Sr. Rehab. Counsellor, Vocational Services	lhaien@scimanitoba.ca	234
Artem Dolia	Rehab. Counsellor, Vocational Services	adolia@scimanitoba.ca	230
Maria Cabas	Rehab. Counsellor, Indigenous Services	mcabas@scimanitoba.ca	228
Annika Onosson	Rehab. Counsellor, Indigenous Services - Trainee	aonosson@scimanitoba.ca	223
Michael Reimer	Transitional Vocational Enhancement Counsellor - Trainee	mreimer@scimanitoba.ca	226
Anne McIntosh	Rehab. Counsellor, Support for Work Related Injuries	amcintosh@scimanitoba.ca	231
LéAmber Kensley	Rehab. Counsellor, Health Promotion Services	lkensley@scimanitoba.ca	204-781-0313



SCI Manitoba Announcement

The Board of Directors of SCI Manitoba is pleased to announce that Dan Joannis has been appointed Interim Executive Director, effective immediately. Dan has been actively involved with SCI Manitoba for many years and has served the organization in a variety of capacities, most recently as President of the Board of Directors. As a member of SCI Manitoba, Dan brings a wealth of personal and professional experience to this position and we are confident that the organizational and leadership skills he has demonstrated will help guide our work and set a course for the future during these uncertain times. Please join me in welcoming Dan to this critical position and lending your support as he carries out his many duties and responsibilities. Dan can be reached by phone at 204-786-4753 ext. 224 or by email at djoannis@scimanitoba.ca.

The Board is equally pleased to announce that Darlene Cooper and Gail Burnside have agreed not only to resume their previous roles but also to take on additional leadership and administrative responsibilities. Therefore, effective immediately, Darlene will assume the roles of Director of Rehabilitation Services and Assistant Executive Director, while Gail assumes the roles of Rehabilitation Counsellor - Hospital Services and Assistant Director of Rehabilitation Services. This internal realignment of our management structure reflects the need for enhanced collaboration at the senior management level to better prepare the organization for the formidable challenges ahead. The Board of Directors sincerely appreciates the contributions of these key staff members and is grateful for their willingness to continue supporting the important work of SCI Manitoba by taking on these added responsibilities. Please join me in offering Darlene and Gail our ongoing encouragement and support in their evolving roles. Darlene can be reached by phone at 204-786-4753 ext. 225 or by email at djcooper@scimanitoba.ca, while Gail can be reached by phone at 204-786-4753 ext. 229 or by email at gburnside@scimanitoba.ca.

Meet the Newest Counsellor at SCI Manitoba



Greetings! My name is Natasha Schreyer. I recently joined SCI Manitoba as the Rehabilitation Counsellor—Transitional Services. My formal education began at the University of Saskatchewan where I completed my Bachelors in nursing. After some time working in the health care field, I returned to school to further my education and capacity for helping those in need of additional community support services. I received my diploma with honours in addictions and community service work from CDI College in Winnipeg, which led me to my previous position as the counselling lead with a non-profit organization in Winnipeg's north end. There I supported individuals through coordination and delivery of holistic care services.

I enjoy, and am passionate about, being a resource to our members and look forward to the future with SCI Manitoba.

Yours in Service,
Natasha Schreyer



Proud History | Vibrant Future

In 2021, SCI Manitoba is celebrating 75 years of supporting Manitobans living with spinal cord injury and we're excited to announce we'll be holding a virtual event to commemorate this special anniversary.

SAVE THE DATE:

Wednesday, November 3, 2021, starting at 7:00 pm

The event will be livestreamed and will feature lots of fun and entertaining segments including a silent auction with many great prizes, a video highlighting our history, interviews with important figures who helped shape our organization, details about our services and the impact on our members, some success stories, a spotlight on the Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation, and the inaugural presentation of the . . .

E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award

Please join us for this exciting event, which will help increase awareness about spinal cord injury (SCI) and raise our profile in the community so that everyone impacted by SCI will know where to turn and how to reach us.

Visit us on Facebook (@scimanitoba), then 'like' and 'follow' us to stay updated on what's happening at SCI Manitoba and with the 75th anniversary event!



On the Road Again

By Laurence Haien

In the article that follows, Derek is interviewed by Laurence Haien regarding the path he followed to continue as a driver after his spinal cord injury diagnosis.

Please tell the readers about yourself.

I'm fifty-seven-years-old, married, and have three adult daughters. I recently became a grandfather. My granddaughter was born on February 6, 2021; her name is Larissa Anastasia.

I was diagnosed with a T-4, complete spinal cord injury in 2012 and remained in the Rehabilitation Hospital for about four months. I use a manual wheelchair for mobility and experience impaired motor function and sensation from the chest down.

What kind of vehicle did you drive before your spinal cord injury and did you have to reconsider this after your injury?

Previously, I drove a Nissan SUV. Although I prefer a compact vehicle, I didn't look forward to having to disassemble my wheelchair every time I drove and then having the wheelchair occupy space in the vehicle—unless someone was willing to put the wheelchair in the trunk. This would have been inconvenient and would have made me dependent on another person; I wanted to be as independent as possible. So, I began to consider and explore options.

Did you attend the Driver Assessment Management Program (DAMP) at the Rehabilitation Hospital?

Yes, I was referred to DAMP. They assessed me and determined that I would require hand controls. They demonstrated how to disassemble my wheelchair and how to get it into and out of the vehicle and how to perform my transfers safely.

Now you drive a Toyota Tacoma? How did that come about?

Well, I did some internet research and found Move Mobility, called and spoke with—I guess—a consultant. He came to my home and made several suggestions. This was very helpful because he informed me that not all equipment could be installed in every vehicle. Also, it was good to consult with a knowledgeable person to ensure the vehicle I was considering for purchase (Toyota Tacoma) could be modified or outfitted with the equipment I required.

The lift for the wheelchair was manufactured by Harmor, a company located in Florida. The lift is permanently installed on the flatbed of the truck; it looks like a small crane. The arm is remotely raised or lowered and will deliver my wheelchair from the truck bed to the driver's side door so I can transfer when I want to exit my vehicle. Al-



ternately, it will retrieve my wheelchair after I've transferred to the driver's seat and place my wheelchair on the truck's flatbed.

Additionally, I had a lift installed inside my truck. This consists of a collapsible platform that rests against the driver's side seat and the door; the lifting mechanism is mounted behind the driver's side seat but is also secured to and interacts with the collapsible platform. Both of these are also controlled remotely.

When I want to enter the truck, the platform unfolds and lowers to the level of the truck floor. I transfer from my wheelchair onto the platform; it elevates me to the level of the seat; I transfer.

Technology is impressive—it sounds expensive, though?

Well, I paid \$11,000.00 for both. The lift came with a one-year warranty for parts and labour.



Have you experienced any problems with the lifts?

No, nothing that was major. There was a slight delay in the delivery of the lifts because they were shipped from the United States. There was a small issue related to a manufacturer's recall on a control circuit. There was also a problem with the electrical connection and the lift installed in the cargo bed which was quickly remedied by Move Mobility.



What type of maintenance do the lifts require?

I've done limited maintenance on the units—other than periodic lubrication of the moveable parts.

We experience extreme seasonal temperatures in Winnipeg; do the lifts work well year round?

Yes, but I do find the lift on the flatbed makes a lot of noise during the winter when it is especially cold; the functioning of the lift has never been affected.

Do you think having been a mechanic might have helped you with this process?

Yeah, I think that's true. I considered many technical things before I purchased the truck and the lifts, for example, would the truck fit into the garage with the lift installed on the flatbed and where was the location of the fuse box for



the lift, in the event that I needed to change it?

A few years ago I drove to Fargo with my wife during the winter and stayed overnight in a hotel. The weather was especially cold. The truck didn't have much time to warm up the following morning. The platform that I transfer onto and that elevates me to seat level for my final transfer stopped working.

I was still able to transfer into the truck. I knew immediately it was the fuse and how to replace it. We purchased a fuse at a local hardware store; I replaced it and the lift has worked properly since. Having had that experience, I would recommend that people consider the installation of a remote vehicle starter so their vehicles could be warmed during cold weather.

Do you have advice for those readers who may be considering the purchase of a vehicle and equipment to enable them to drive?

Consult with Move Mobility first. Ask them if you could have a demonstration of the equipment you are considering for purchase. Of course, ask them if the vehicle you are considering for purchase could be modified or could accommodate the equipment you're considering. YouTube has many videos that are informative, and I found helpful.

I think individuals need to make sure the vehicle and equipment fit into their garages. I took many measurements beforehand to ensure there would be no problem. I also had to consider the height of the lift on the flatbed of the truck and whether my garage could accommodate it.

Additionally, I back into my garage because we are a two-vehicle household. This provides enough room for my wife to drive her car into the garage. I back into the garage because the side door is on the right. If I drove the front end of my vehicle into the garage, I wouldn't have room to navigate beside and around the truck to access the side door. I would also suggest for this reason that individuals consider the purchase of a vehicle equipped with a backup camera. Two additional things come to mind: because my wheelchair is lifted onto the flatbed of the truck, I learned quickly to remove my wheelchair cushion so it could be stored in the cabin where it remains warm. This makes it more comfortable for me when I transfer onto my wheelchair but it also prevents damage to the cushion. Additionally, because of our severe winters and the amount of snowfall, four-wheel drive is an important consideration—you don't want to get stuck!

One final point—I always have a reaching aid in the truck. Several times during transfers, I've lost or dropped items, such as my keys or cellphone. With the reaching aid, I don't have to get out of the vehicle to pick up a lost or dropped item.



What difference does driving make in your life?

It's a life-saver. Without being able to drive, I don't know what I would do. It's freedom! It's independence! I was able to drive one of my daughters to school for a few years. This gave me purpose, routine, and time with her. The ability to drive enhances the quality of my life and makes it easier.

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HSC Occupational Therapy Department

Driver Assessment & Management Program (DAMP)

Referral Procedure

Driving safely requires excellent physical and cognitive skills, as well as good judgment. Various medical conditions or impairments can negatively affect driving, putting the driver and others at risk on the road.

Drivers are required by law to report any change in their health or physical condition that is likely to affect ability to drive. Physicians and optometrists are also legally required to report patients whose medical condition may affect vision, physical, or cognitive abilities related to driving. Refer to www.mpi.mb.ca/Pages/medical-fitness-review.aspx for more information.

The DAMP referral process is coordinated by Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) Driver Fitness.

The physician or driver must contact MPI Driver Fitness at: MPI Driver Fitness, Box 6300, Winnipeg MB R3C 4A4, Phone: 204-985-1900 or Fax: 204-953-4992.

Once notified, MPI Driver Fitness will forward the required medical report forms to the driver. The driver's physician completes and returns the forms to MPI Driver Fitness. Driver Fitness will review the medical information and contact the driver if further information is required such as an ophthalmology or neurology report, or reports on successfully completed treatment programs.

Based on the medical information submitted, MPI Driver Fitness may or may not suspend the licence until the associated medical reports and/or further assessment has been completed.

After reviewing the medical information, MPI Driver Fitness determines if a DAMP assessment is required and sends a referral to DAMP at the Occupational Therapy Department at Health Sciences Centre. An appointment is not scheduled without this referral from MPI. If MPI Driver Fitness determines that a DAMP assessment is not required, or if a different type of evaluation is required, they will contact the driver directly.

Once a referral is received, the Occupational Therapy Department will send the driver a letter which provides a description of the DAMP assessment and information regarding appointment scheduling.

If you have questions regarding the referral process, contact MPI Driver Fitness at 204-985-1900.



Health Sciences Centre
Winnipeg

Virtual Vehicle Modification Fair

Building on 18 years of experience with vehicle modification events across the province, Spinal Cord Injury Ontario, with the help of over a dozen charities, is excited to be hosting "On the Road Again" – their first virtual, Canada-wide Vehicle Modification Fair.

This comprehensive online event will provide content that will be relevant to the disability community across Canada. You will be able to view a variety of modified vehicles and ask questions to help you find the right vehicle to fit your needs and interests. Both vendors and vehicle owners will be there to showcase the possibilities in vehicle modification and share their expertise and lived experience. The event will also include vital information about all that it takes to get back "on the road again" – from assessment to driver rehabilitation. Whether you have a new disability or have been driving accessible vehicles for 30 years, "On the Road Again" will be an event not to be missed.

Sessions will take place on August 18th, August 25th and September 1st. Visit SCI Ontario's website for more information and to register: sciontario.org/vehicle-modification-show

Let's Get Manitoba Vaccinated!

**Plan to get the COVID-19 vaccine
as soon as it's your turn.**

Visit **ProtectMB.ca** for:

- who is eligible
- how to book your appointment
- clinic locations
- VAX Facts, Q&As, Our Stories, and more

**You can also sign up to be notified when
it's your turn.**

#PROTECT MB 

Manitoba 



MANITOBA LAUNCHES NEW, SECURE IMMUNIZATION CARDS FOR FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE

**New Approach Recognizes Importance of Immunization to Protect People,
Safely Resume Activities: Pallister**

Fully immunized Manitobans will now be able to travel without having to self-isolate for two weeks upon return with a new, secure immunization card that will be available to people two weeks after they have received both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, Premier Brian Pallister announced today.

“Many Manitobans have rolled up their sleeves over these past few months and done their part in protecting our province, and I want to commend them for doing so,” said Pallister. “Manitobans have told us that getting back to the things they love and miss is one of the biggest incentives to getting vaccinated. As a government, we are doing everything we can to bolster vaccine availability and accessibility, and equipping Manitobans with the information and support they need to make the right decision to protect themselves, their loved ones and their community.”

The premier noted that inter-provincial travel without being required to self-isolate on the return to Manitoba is one of the first benefits from being fully immunized. In addition, Manitoba health-care facilities, including hospitals and personal care homes, will permit expanded visitation if both the patient/resident and visitor are fully vaccinated. This benefit is expected to be extended to health-care facility visitation in the coming week. Individuals also will continue to be exempt from self-isolation if they are an identified close contact of a COVID-19 case if they are fully vaccinated, with direction provided from public health officials. Additional benefits are expected to be added in the coming weeks.

To be eligible to receive an immunization card, Manitobans must:

- have a Manitoba health card;
- have received two doses of a vaccine; and
- wait 14 days after getting the second dose of vaccine, so it can take full effect.

The premier noted the process to order a new immunization card is quick, simple and secure. Two weeks after receiving a second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, Manitobans may apply for the card using the new online portal at immunizationcard.manitoba.ca/.

The digital and physical cards contain no personal health information or data. Rather, the cards only show the person's first and last names and a QR code. When scanned, the QR code will show the person is fully vaccinated. Once someone has successfully completed the online request, they will automatically receive access to a digital card. There is also an option to request a physical card that will be mailed to the address on the applicant's Manitoba health card. If a physical card is requested, it can be expected in the mail within 14 days.

People who would like to request their card but do not have internet access can contact the insured benefits branch of Manitoba Health and Seniors Care at 204-786-7101 or 1-800-392-1207 (toll-free) to request a card. Individuals are encouraged to seek assistance from family and friends before contacting the province.

“We are all eager to be able to travel, visit family and friends, and enjoy the many freedoms we have taken for granted and missed these many months,” said Pallister. “Getting vaccinated and following public health orders to protect each other and our health-care system is the fastest way to save our summer and get back to doing some of the things we love and see the people we miss.”

The new card provides proof of immunization status only. Other details, such as dates of immunization and the type of vaccine received are part of an individual's COVID-19 immunization record, which is also available online at manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/immunization-record.html.

For more information or to apply for a secure immunization card, visit: immunizationcard.manitoba.ca/.

June 8, 2021 Province of Manitoba News Release Reprinted with Permission.



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Legal Aid Manitoba Public Interest Law Centre—Advocacy Unit Services

By Jennifer Unger

I am pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself and to provide an outline of the types of advocacy services offered by our unit.

I am an administrative law advocate with Legal Aid Manitoba. I work out of the Public Interest Law Centre (PILC), which represents groups and individuals on issues affecting the environment, human rights, Indigenous people, consumers and low-income persons. The Public Interest Law Centre assists those who are far too often silenced in legal and public policy debates by providing high quality, evidence-based advocacy.

There are four specialized advocates at PILC. We work under the direction of PILC's Director, Byron Williams, and staff lawyer Allison Fenske, by assisting people with a variety of poverty-related legal issues.

Our main areas of service are Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) and Residential Tenancies matters. We provide guidance and information to those experiencing issues related to their benefits or housing, free of charge. We also provide assistance in refugee matters and other types of government benefits, such as Community Living disABILITY services.

In addition to our guidance and information services, we also provide representation for clients in matters before tribunals such as the Social Services Appeal Board and the Residential Tenancies Branch / Commission for those who qualify for Legal Aid.

While our offices are currently closed to the public due to

COVID-19, we continue to offer all our regular services, including no-charge consultations, by phone or email. If necessary, arrangements can be made for in-person meetings while following all government public health requirements. We also offer information and education sessions to groups which are currently being offered using video conferencing. Our unit is here to help and we look forward to connecting with the community.

Our group can be reached at: tenant@legalaid.mb.ca or (204) 881-1714. Please also feel free to contact one of us directly at:

Jennifer Unger	(204) 985-8536	jeung@legalaid.mb.ca
Dan Gilson	(204) 985-5241	dagil@legalaid.mb.ca
Mia Van Helden	(204) 985-8546	mivan@legalaid.mb.ca
Stacy Regunay	(204) 985-5226	streg@legalaid.mb.ca

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jennifer Unger is an Administrative Law Advocate with Legal Aid Manitoba's Public Interest Law Centre ("PILC"). Jennifer has been employed by Legal Aid Manitoba since 2000 and worked extensively in the areas of Family and Poverty Law. Prior to joining PILC in 2013, Jennifer worked for 11 years with the Administration Office of Legal Aid.

Disability Inclusion Action Plan

The Government of Canada is engaging Canadians on how to improve the lives of Canadians with disabilities. Your feedback will support the development of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, which will focus on:

- reducing poverty among persons with disabilities in Canada;
- getting more persons with disabilities into good quality jobs;
- helping meet the Accessible Canada Act goal of a barrier-free Canada by 2040;
- making it easier for persons with disabilities to access federal programs and services; and
- fostering a culture of inclusion.

You are invited to participate by completing the online survey at: www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada/consultation-disability-inclusion-action-plan.html by **August 31, 2021**.

If you wish to print and complete the survey by hand, contact the SCI Manitoba office and a copy will be sent to you. The completed survey can then be sent by mail to:

Disability Inclusion Action Plan
Employment and Social Development Canada
140 Promenade du Portage, Phase IV
Gatineau, QC
K1A 0J9

Or by email: accessible-canada@hrsdc.gc.ca.



The Search Begins

By Laurence Haien

In the following article, Laurence Haien speaks to Annika about her educational training coming to an end and her hopes for the future.

Annika, it's been two years since you were last interviewed for ParaTracks. At that time you were attending your second year of the social work program at the University of Manitoba. Now you've completed your course work and practicum and are waiting to graduate.

First, please share something about yourself with the readers?

Well, let's see. I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease in 2017 which resulted in my spinal cord injury. I am diagnosed with a C-3 incomplete spinal cord injury. I've made significant physical gains since you interviewed me in 2019. I am able to walk to the top of local hill, slowly. I use a manual treadmill five days weekly and do some weight training. I recently started riding a bicycle and am able to ride for up to twenty minutes. This is something I thought I would never be able to do after my spinal cord injury diagnosis. I enjoy being out-of-doors and am currently enjoying life and looking forward to graduating from the social work program at the University of Manitoba.

Were there any courses that stand out for you because they were particularly interesting, difficult or both?

I took a mental health course which I really enjoyed. It opened my eyes. It made me think of mental health, not only in terms of individuals who struggle with personal issues but in terms of whole communities and how circumstances in communities impact the mental health of individuals. For example, if Indigenous people reside in communities that have limited or substandard resources, such as water, housing, electricity, food, or medical services, this creates stress and impacts the way individuals perceive themselves and how they interact with one another and with family members.

Additionally, the course gave me ideas about how to maintain my own mental health, such as taking slow, deep, regular breaths while waiting for a medical appointment, being assertive, being more aware of my environment, and learning to be in the moment versus always thinking about the future.

A course that I was required to take but which was of less interest to me was community development. I was able to find aspects of the course that I enjoyed and was able to contribute thoughts and opinions regarding topics that I felt passionate about; for example, the drug crisis in Vancouver and the sex trade industry. The system has a tendency to discriminate against and isolate drug users and sex trade

workers. Everyone has a story. I find peoples' stories interesting; these help me understand how and why people come to do the things they do. Also, some of these issues resonated with my own experience growing up and being exposed to drug users.

I know that you took a couple of French courses as electives in the last two years. Please tell the readers how you came to take French and about the courses.

I actually wanted to take Spanish because I spoke it before arriving in Canada. Spanish was not offered at the time. French was an option. I had taken French while attending high school and there are similarities between the two because they are both romance languages. So I thought, 'Why not?'

The first course was introductory but included conversational French which occurred in small groups. It was difficult but fun at the same time because I came to realize that everyone struggled in their own way. During these two courses, I learned to read and write in French too. Over time, I came to understand that every component of a sentence had to agree with every other part. Making this connection was very helpful for my learning.

I know the adage "If you don't use it, you lose it" applies to language, too. Have you maintained your French language skills since completing the courses?

Yes, I retained some of what I've learned but unfortunately, I have no opportunity to use French at home or anywhere else. When time permits, I will go on the internet to various sites and this helps somewhat, but it's a poor substitute for speaking, reading or writing daily.

Having graduated from the social work program at the University of Manitoba, I know that practicums are a requirement. Tell the readers about your practicums?

Like you, I completed two practicums. The first was at an organization that supports families. I was there for approximately one month and realized the fit was not right for me and that I wasn't going to have an opportunity to develop many skills I would require in social work.

That must have been frustrating for you? What did you do?

Yes, it was frustrating, and I gave the situation a lot of consideration. I decided to speak to the liaison responsible for field placements, reported what my experience was, and we discussed alternate placements. I subsequently secured a field placement at the Learning Disability Association of Manitoba where I attended full-days twice weekly from October to April. I facilitated small groups where I taught social skills to eleven and twelve-year-old students. There were approximately 12 students who attended the school.



So I also had opportunity to supervise in the classroom, grade tests, and was tasked with researching and finding new reading materials for the students.

My final practicum which I recently completed was done at St. Raphael Wellness Centre which assists individuals struggling with substance abuse. I particularly enjoyed this placement because I had the opportunity to facilitate small groups, perform intakes, work on professional documentation, and also had access to an onsite counsellor who assisted me with some of my own issues. It was a safe environment and a perfect fit for my interests and needs.

Sometimes the groups consisted of men and women, other times only women. Typically eight individuals attended the groups but occasionally I had as many as eleven participants. It was in the context of group sessions that I learned everyone has a story and the importance of listening without judgement.

Did you run these groups on your own?

No, I was partnered with two individuals at different times. Working with another person can be helpful when the workload is shared. But if this doesn't happen, it can make things difficult. In one situation, I found that I took on responsibility for everything, including the content for each group session. I tend to give people the benefit of the doubt but learned the importance of asserting myself and the need to tell people what I require from them. Otherwise everything becomes internalized and I end up feeling angry. So it was a life lesson.

What effect did the pandemic have on your education?

Because of the pandemic and the restrictions associated with it, the groups were eventually delivered online. Thankfully most of our participants had internet access and had either a cell phone or computer available. A few individuals who lacked computer access were allowed to use the computer in the boardroom.

So, what was it like to facilitate virtual groups?

Delivering groups online does have its challenges, for sure. Technology doesn't always cooperate. Sometimes the internet connection was poor or interrupted; sometimes I couldn't hear the participants or they couldn't hear me. Doing activities online which was always part of the group format was also very challenging. For example, I occasionally used music therapy in the groups. As you could imagine, if the internet connection was bad or the sound quality was poor, this was not conducive to relaxation. Mostly though, I'm not a fan of virtual groups. It's hard for participants to establish a personal connection with one another and with the group facilitator online and therefore difficult for individuals to tap into their feelings. The ability to tap into feelings and to support one another is an essential part of the group process.

I imagine juggling your course work, practicums, family responsibilities, and coping with the pandemic were stressful? How did you care for yourself at this time?

I do a lot of journaling, especially when I have too many thoughts running around in my head. I've journaled for years. It allows me to put my thoughts on paper and to get them out of my head. Days later I can review my notes and this often gives me perspective on whatever it is that was concerning me. Journaling frees me. I mentioned previously that I work out regularly, try to eat healthily, and maintain a regular sleep schedule.

Now that you've completed your program, what's the next step?

Well at the moment I'm taking a bit of a rest. My next priority is to secure employment as a social worker and to have a steady income. Because I had previously been employed as an educational assistant, I thought I would like to work in a school setting. Now I'm considering other places where I might like to work. I recently had a virtual interview; I remain hopeful about the outcome of that. The virtual interview was unusual. Of course, I was nervous beforehand, got a good night's sleep and was prepared. I just found being interviewed online is a strange experience because it's hard to read people. I find in person, I'm better able to read facial expressions, body postures, tone of voice, and to be interactive. I also feel that feedback is lacking with online interactions.

Are there any final thoughts you'd like to share with the readers regarding your educational journey?

Life is a journey however you look at it. Enjoy every step, even when you experience discomfort. It is during times of discomfort and challenge that you learn the most about yourself. I have learned that I have strength and can accomplish the things I want with hard work and perseverance. I'm proud of my accomplishments.

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Vehicles for Hire: Accessible Service Improvements

City of Winnipeg Stakeholder Engagement Survey

The City of Winnipeg met with stakeholders in January 2020 to discuss engagement and held several meetings in September 2020 to gather insight and feedback on proposed accessibility improvements that are to be funded through the vehicle for hire accessibility surcharge. A stakeholder engagement summary and appendices summarizing the feedback from vehicles for hire stakeholders in 2020 are now available.

Background:

Since the Vehicles for Hire By-law came into effect to regulate these services within Winnipeg, an accessibility surcharge of \$0.07 per trip has been charged to both personal transportation provider dispatchers and to taxi dispatchers to encourage a minimum ratio of accessible vehicles within the fleets of service providers. Revenues collected by the City of Winnipeg (City) from this surcharge are intended to be used to make accessibility improvements to local vehicle for hire services.

Engagement:

As noted above, the City met with stakeholders in January 2020 to discuss engagement and held several meetings in September 2020 to gather insight and feedback on proposed accessibility improvements.

Background information was provided in advance along with the presentation.

Stakeholder Groups

The following groups were represented in the process:

- Accessible vehicles for hire dispatchers
- Accessible vehicles for hire drivers
- Accessible vehicles for hire owners
- Accessible vehicles for hire Users
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Disabilities Issues Office, Province of Manitoba
- Independent Living Resource Centre
- Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba
- The University of Winnipeg

- Transportation Options Network for Seniors
- Vehicles for Hire training providers
- Vehicles for Hire Stakeholder Advisory Group
- Vision Impaired Resource Network

What We Heard:

- Issues that need to be addressed with accessible service improvements were accurately captured.
- Goals are aligned to addressing issues.
- Solutions should consider and benefit both users and drivers.
- A centralized dispatch system should be fully accessible, properly resourced, and available at all times of day.
- Solutions should meet the intended results and should be measured to ensure they are successful.

Next Steps:

Recommendations for improving accessible vehicles for hire service along with financial impacts will be provided to the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works (SPC-IRPW).

The SPC-IRPW will consider the recommendations and recommendations may go forward to Executive Policy Committee and Council for further considerations.

To learn more, visit: winnipeg.ca/vehicles-for-hire

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Province Completes Significant Park Accessibility Improvements

The Manitoba government continues to make investments and improvements to enhance the visitor experience in provincial parks, including with increased installations of mobility mats that greatly improve accessibility to several of the busiest park beaches, Conservation and Climate Minister Sarah Guillemard announced today.

“Our provincial parks are designed for all Manitobans and we have made significant investments to improve their accessibility,” said Guillemard. “From mobility mats at beaches to accessible trails, buildings and other infrastructure, we support the goals of National AccessAbility Week and Manitoba Access Awareness Week, and want all park visitors to be comfortable and able to enjoy the great outdoors.”

The province has expanded the number of beaches that will improve access to the water with mobility mats. Often described as mobi-mats, they were introduced in Manitoba at Birds Hill and St. Malo provincial parks and have been added this year to Pioneer Bay Beach in Clearwater Lake Provincial Park, Falcon Lake Beach in Whiteshell Provincial Park, West Beach in Grand Beach Provincial Park and Kiche Manitou Beach in Spruce Woods Provincial Park, as well as in Lundar Beach, Winnipeg Beach and Rainbow Beach provincial parks.

At Lundar Beach, other upgrades include a ramp along the

trail, wider doors on the washrooms and accessible pathway construction. A new accessible washroom at the south end of the campground is expected to be complete and operational this month.

Duff Roblin Provincial Park includes a \$2-million accessible viewing platform near the Red River Floodway Inlet Control Structure in St. Norbert, ensuring full access to all who come to marvel at the floodway, the minister said, adding future plans at the park include an accessible walking trail and expanded seating.

Across the province, park redevelopment plans have included accessibility improvements such as an addition of fully accessible washrooms and showers in Paint Lake Provincial Park.

Recreation is an important part of the park experience, so accessible components have been added to playground structures at the Gyles, Brereton and Adam Lake campgrounds, at the Gull Harbour beach in Hecla and at Moose Lake. The play structure at the community centre at Grand Beach is being made fully accessible.

Trail users will see further improvements, such as a more accessible trail installed to replace a boardwalk and stair system at Pisew Falls, and improvements in the works at the Cedar Bog Trail in Birds Hill Provincial Park. Boardwalk sections will be added this year to frequently wet areas, which may not make the trail fully accessible but will improve the general accessibility of the area, Guillemard noted.

The minister added the week of May 30 to June 5 is National AccessAbility Week and Manitoba Access Awareness Week.

Manitobans can stay up to date with provincial parks news, activities and events by following Manitoba Parks on Facebook at facebook.com/MBGovParks or Twitter at twitter.com/MBGovParks.

June 2, 2021 Province of Manitoba News Release Reprinted with Permission.

What is ILRC Able Sail?

ILRC Able Sail is a Winnipeg-based, accessible summer sailing program offered by the Independent Living Resource Centre. The program is founded, coordinated and operated by people with disabilities and dedicated volunteers. Their mission is to provide Manitobans with disabilities the opportunity to access and enjoy sailing activities while promoting enhanced independence and community. Their goals are:

- To provide sailing opportunities for Manitobans regardless of ability, age, or economic means
- To provide a unique, enjoyable experience for our participants which includes opportunities for social, recreational, rehabilitative and competitive activities
- To build confidence, self-esteem, and enhance independence for people with mobility or other impairments

For more information, call 204-947-0194 or email: ablesail@ilrc.ca

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Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation Inc. (MPF) News

MPF funds go to work in four main areas that are not supported by any other sources in Manitoba: special projects, product testing, research and direct aid to persons with spinal cord injuries who do not have the necessary financial resources for equipment and/or services. All requests for direct aid are initiated through SCI Manitoba. Individuals must provide information on their financial status, explain why they cannot meet the expense within their own budget, and identify any other potential sources to support the request including potential for contribution from family.

SCI Manitoba thanks MPF for its continued support to improving the quality of life of persons with spinal cord injury.

MPF has approved several requests for financial support during the past several months. Since the last issue of ParaTracks, financial support totaling \$5,104.96 has been granted. Some of the highlights follow:

- Funding was granted for the purchase of a specialized manual wheelchair for a member who would benefit greatly from the use of the manual wheelchair in addition to their power wheelchair. Having the two types of wheelchairs would further the member's independence and ability to participate in therapies and meaningful activities for their mental health and physical health.

- Funds were provided to assist with the purchase of equipment for a member. A ceiling track would prevent falls and enable the member to independently get out of bed. A backrest would decrease the member's pain and increase their seating tolerance so that they can complete more of their daily activities independently.

Visit MPF's website at: www.scimanitoba.ca/mpf. Applications for assistance are available by email at info@scimanitoba.ca or by phone 204-786-4753.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

YES!

Count me in as a member of Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba Inc. All members receive "ParaTracks" SCI Manitoba's newsletter and voting privileges at the Annual General Meeting.

Members also receive discounts at various health care supply stores:

Stevens Home Health Care Supplies (10% off supplies & equipment), The Access Store (10%), Northland Home Health Care (10% off medical supplies) and Fido Mobile (\$10 off monthly phone plan).

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- ☐ **PATRON MEMBER: \$500 AND OVER**

All Monies donated remain in Manitoba to support SCI Manitoba Inc. An income tax receipt will be issued for any amount over \$15.00. Sustaining, Charter and Patron Members will receive recognition of their generous contribution in the context of events such as our Annual General Meetings or in the programs of other SCI Manitoba functions.

☐ **NEW**

☐ **RENEWAL**

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By signing above, you are consenting to the use of your personal information (name and address only) by SCI Manitoba for the purposes of sending out SCI's newsletters, membership cards and receipts, reminder notices and meeting notices. SCI Manitoba does not sell or trade personal information and does not rent out its mailing lists.

For more information

Phone: 204-786-4753

Fax: 204-786-1140

Toll-free within MB: 1-800-720-4933

Email: info@scimanitoba.ca