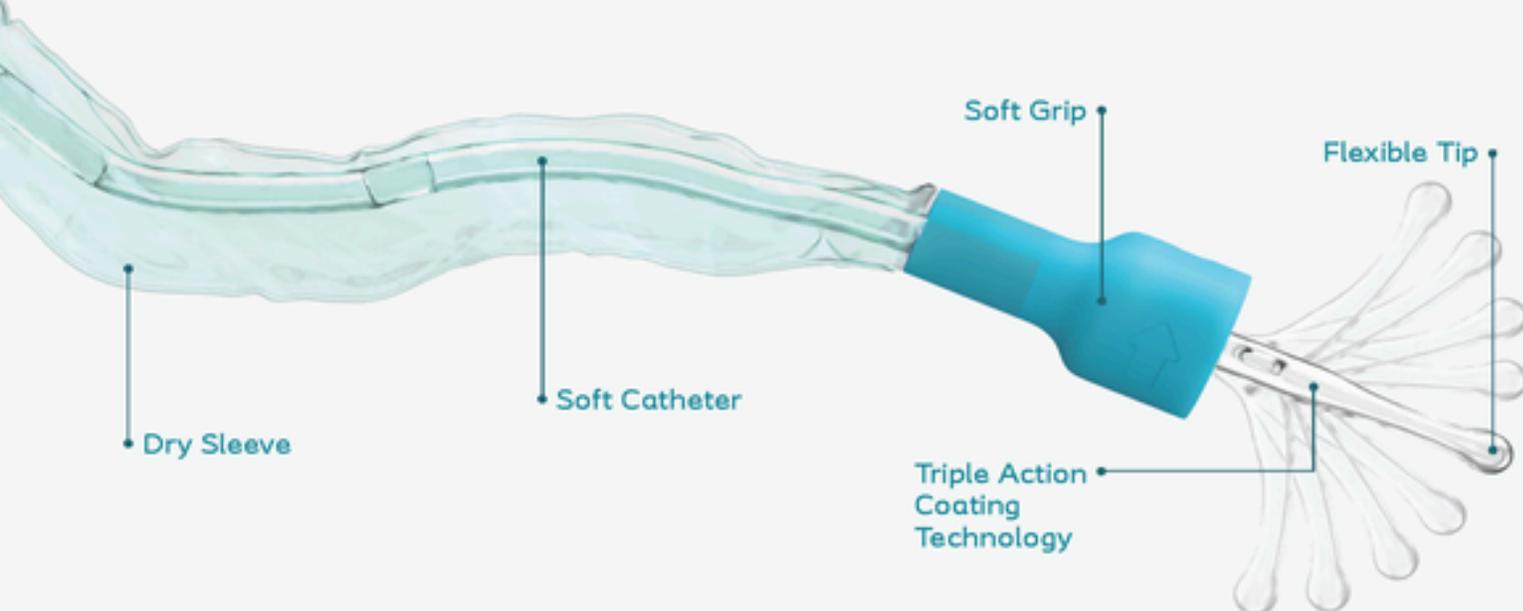




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### **ON THE COVER**

*SCI Manitoba member, Jamee-Lynn Ellis (front, kneeling), and her team of supporters, including Terra Coulter, SCI Manitoba Rehabilitation Counsellor (back, left). See Terra's article on page 7 about Jamee's post SCI journey.*



# ANNOUNCEMENTS!!

SCI Manitoba member Jeff Furlong and his spouse Jill are excited to announce the birth of their daughter, Alice Carmel Furlong, born at 10:13 pm on May 8, 2025 in Selkirk, Manitoba.



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*If you have news to share with SCI Manitoba and the readers of ParaTracks, please contact us at [info@scimanitoba.ca](mailto:info@scimanitoba.ca).*

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

*Sandra Doerksen  
Russell Fisher  
Steven Hofer  
Roderick Johnston*

*Dionisia Marzan  
Keith Mentuck  
Robert Leo Michell  
Glenn Ohlman*

*Fred Pinder  
Barbara Rapson  
Samuel Thordarson  
Roger Traverse*

*Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba acknowledges that our work extends throughout the province of Manitoba on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, and Nehethowuk Nations, the ancestral lands of the Inuit, and the homeland of the Red River Métis. Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba is committed to creating an organizational and service delivery framework that respects and honours the rights of Indigenous Peoples living with spinal cord injury, and to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.*

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# One Year Strong

## *Jamee-Lynn's Inspiring SCI Journey*

Just over one year after sustaining an L3 incomplete spinal cord injury secondary to an ATV accident, Jamee-Lynn (Jamee) Ellis showed that determination, friendship, and an unbreakable spirit can overcome even the steepest obstacles.

On a sunny day this past August at the Assiniboia Downs Event Centre located in Winnipeg, Jamee laced up her runners, surrounded by an entourage of close friends, and took on the MUDGIRL race. This 5km charitable and fun obstacle course is designed to challenge participants with mud pits, climbing walls, and slippery slides.

For many, the MUDGIRL event is a test of endurance and teamwork, but for Jamee, it was something much deeper: a celebration of resilience and a powerful reminder of how far she's come in just fifteen months.

"Last year, I was attending inpatient rehab on RR5 at the Health Sciences Centre," Jamee shared. "This year, I wanted to show myself, and others, that life doesn't stop after a spinal cord injury. You just find new ways to move forward."

Jamee finds that daily exercise is a huge part of her recovery. Post-injury, she found going to her local gym, the "Reps", in her hometown of Teulon, provided both a sense of purpose and a healthy routine. She also managed to motivate a few close friends to join her.

Jamee's 10-year-old son, Nixyn, is her biggest cheerleader of all, and having his mom back, happy and healthy, is the best gift of all.



Jamee-Lynn Ellis, front/kneeling, elated after completing the MUDGIRL obstacle race.

Supported by her friends and cheered on by Terra Coulter, Transitional Services counsellor from SCI Manitoba, Jamee tackled each obstacle with determination and a smile. Together, with her friends, she navigated the muddy terrain, proving that true strength isn't just physical - it's equally found in perseverance, community, and the courage to keep pushing forward.

The MUDGIRL race fosters empowerment and camaraderie among women from all backgrounds and abilities while supporting organizations fighting breast cancer.

Jamee crossing the finish line was a moment of triumph - not just for her, but for everyone who's been inspired by her journey, which is a powerful reminder to the spinal cord injury community that progress can come in many forms: standing, walking, or wheeling - each "step" forward is a victory. Congratulations, Jamee, one year strong, and just getting started!

*Terra Coulter, Rehabilitation Counsellor -  
Transitional Services*

# Welcome Kadija!

My name is Kadija Ibrahim, and I am the newest member to join the Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba team as Rehabilitation Counsellor - Health Promotion Services.

I graduated from University of Manitoba with a Bachelors of Sociology, which inspired me to enter the helping profession. I have over 12 years of experience as an intake and case coordinator. I also teach EAL (English as an Additional Language) to newly arrived refugees during my spare time.

I have worked in the settlement/newcomer field for quite some time which I'm passionate about. Teaching helps me stay connected and allows me give back to that community. My goal is to take the experiences I have had, including education, training, work, and lived experience, and walk along with those who are experiencing difficult challenges.

My approach is rooted in empathy, professionalism, and a deep understanding of the



*Kadija Ibrahim*

complex trauma and challenges people face in their journey to healing. It's important to me to help people feel heard, respected, and safe in their environment. My passion is working with those who are struggling in the moment, to help them see the endless potential in the future.

I look forward to bringing my experience and compassionate approach to help the members we serve access needed services and supports to ensure continuity of care, and I am excited about working with the SCI Manitoba team.

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# SOCIAL CLUB

A PLACE TO LAUGH, LEARN, AND CONNECT



Participants at the November 13, 2025 Social Club meeting.

SCI Manitoba's Social Club is off to a fantastic start! The Social Club is a space created exclusively for our members to connect, share stories, and learn from one another. It offers a relaxed and enjoyable environment with no pressure to share. Since its launch earlier this year, engaging meetings have taken place every month. The program is seeing great interest, with members enjoying the sense of community and support it offers.

Through games, conversations, and coffee and snacks, members continue to find new ways to connect and enjoy each other's company.

One participant recently shared:

*I don't want to miss a Social Club meeting, It's something I've really been enjoying lately.*

With each gathering, the Social Club continues to grow stronger, providing an important opportunity for our members to connect, share, and thrive.

The next meetings are planned for November 13 and December 16, 2025, just down the hall from our office at 825 Sherbrook Street.

[Interested in joining or learning more?](#) Reach out to your counsellor by phone or email (see staff contact details on page 5), or contact the office by phone at 204-786-4753 or by email at [info@scimanitoba.ca](mailto:info@scimanitoba.ca). We can't wait to welcome you!

# Holiday Travel Tips for Catheter Users

Are you planning to travel over the holidays with a catheter? It's normal to feel a bit insecure when leaving your home for long periods. Our privacy or what we do when we visit the restroom is usually nobody's business. With the right preparation, you can feel confident and enjoy your holiday travels. To help you get ready for your vacation, our friends at Coloplast have shared some information and a few tips for you in this article.

These are general guidelines meant to help with a few commonly asked questions. You should always follow the specific instructions given by your healthcare provider.

## **Before going away**

Order extra products and order them well in advance. That way, you'll be sure you have enough products in time for your trip.

It's a good idea to order some compact catheters to bring along. SpeediCath® Compact Set catheters are an all-in-one catheter and bag solution - perfect for travelling! They are discreet, instantly ready to use, and come in both male and female versions.

Compact catheters have three main advantages when you're on-the-go:

1. Compact catheters are pre-lubricated and ready to use. This also reduces the chances of bacteria and thus UTIs (compared to non-lubricated catheters).
2. They're discreet and clean. You can toss them in the trash or keep them in your pocket after usage.
3. They can hide in plain sight!

Pack a bladder emergency kit with all the supplies you may need on-the-go. This could include a list



of your products written down with you, just in case. Taking a picture of them to have with you on your phone may also be a good idea.

What we recommend including in your kit:

- Intermittent catheters (3 to 5 days extra from what you have already packed)
- Antibacterial gel or hand wipes and a pair of gloves
- Bladder pads, pull-up, or extra undergarments
- Lubrication if required for uncoated catheters
- Hygiene wipes and toilet paper
- Create a document containing: your doctors' name & contact information, your medical supplier, the name of your catheters and item numbers, and a list of your medications

*\*\* Customize your bladder emergency kit to the items you use and consider essential*

## **On the way**

Keep in mind that temperature has an impact on your products, so think about how this might affect your packing plans. If applicable, keep some supplies in the glove compartment in your car and/or bring some in your carry-on luggage if travelling by plane.

Plan your visits to the bathroom. If you're



travelling by airplane, catheterize as close to boarding as possible. Try to plan all other bathroom visits during your stay, allowing time before or after an event. Set a watch or phone alarm if you're worried that you might forget!

### **At your destination**

Be sure to stay hydrated! When you travel in hot climates, you risk becoming dehydrated. Most people should aim to drink 1.5-2 liters of water per day unless your healthcare provider says otherwise. When it's hot outside, you need to drink even more water.

Keep in mind:

- If you're not sure about the quality of the drinking water, buy bottled water.
- Don't brush your teeth with tap water if it is not safe to drink - use bottled water instead.
- You may also need to be careful with ice,

fruits, and vegetables, depending on where you're travelling.

- Always keep a bottle handy so you can take frequent sips of water.

How do you know if you've consumed enough water? One way to gauge your hydration level is to look at the colour of your urine. If you're well-hydrated, it will probably be pale, and you'll urinate regularly throughout the day.

Travelling should be a fun and exciting experience. With a little extra preparation and planning, you can have a worry-free vacation! Looking for more travel tips? Check out Coloplast's free travel guide for catheter users: [visit.coloplast.ca/TravelGuide/](https://www.coloplast.ca/TravelGuide/)

If you are interested to learn more about SpeediCath® catheters, get in touch with a Coloplast Care Advisor today at 1-866-293-6349 or email [casupport@coloplast.com](mailto:casupport@coloplast.com).

# MANAGING THE WINTER BLUES

As the days become shorter, the temperature drops, and the snow begins to fall, many people experience feelings of sadness or lethargy, which is completely normal. Winter blues is a common phrase to explain the natural sluggishness that occurs around the same time every year, beginning in the fall and continuing into the winter months, resolving in the spring and summer. Though these feelings are common and occur yearly, there is no need to brush them off or tough it out alone. There are a number of things that can alleviate the winter blues.

## Sleep

A reduction of daylight hours can affect our natural sleep-wake cycle, making it harder to maintain a consistent sleep schedule. The number of hours and the quality of sleep are important for feeling rested. To improve your sleep, consider the following sleep hygiene tips:

- Reserve your bed for sleep, so avoid eating or studying in bed
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends, which helps regulate your body's clock
- Expose yourself to light as soon as you wake up. Getting natural light first thing in the morning can help signal to your body that it is time to be awake.
- Reduce or avoid blue light exposure 1-2 hours before bedtime - it can signal to your brain that it is still daytime, which interferes with sleep
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and heavy meals before sleep, they can disrupt your ability to fall and stay asleep

## Exercise

Exercise can help boost your mood and reduce stress. It doesn't necessarily mean you have to join a gym or start an intense workout routine.

The University of British Columbia recommends a "starting level" of twenty minutes of moderate activity twice a week, along with strength training consisting of three sets of ten repetitions, also twice a week. Meeting these goals can be done at home with cost-effective equipment like Therabands and free weights. Therabands are inexpensive, versatile, and suitable for various types of exercises.

Set small but attainable goals for yourself each week, and share your workout plans with a friend to maintain accountability and check in with each other regularly.

## Social Connection

Humans are social creatures, and being near others can greatly impact our mood. As winter brings harsh conditions for transportation and gatherings, it can be tempting to withdraw socially. When feeling down, it can be hard to be social. However, reduced socialization can worsen negative feelings. Making an effort to connect with people you enjoy being around will make a difference by offering support, a shoulder to help carry your burdens, and sharing laughter to give you a little boost.

Family, friends, peers, and coworkers all provide a sense of community that can help alleviate the winter blues.

SCI Manitoba is dedicated to supporting our members and the broader community. We host monthly meetings called [Social Club](#) to facilitate connections among our members. It's normal to have some days when you feel down. But if you feel down for days at a time and you can't get motivated to do activities you normally enjoy, it's important to see your health care provider. Please note that the article addresses winter blues rather than clinical depression. If you or someone you know needs immediate help, reach out to crisis support.

*Alexandria Toews, Rehabilitation Counsellor  
- Vocational Services*

**National Suicide Line: 988 national suicide line, can call or text.  
[www.988.ca](http://www.988.ca)**

**Klinik Crisis Line: 204-786-8686.  
Toll-free: 1-888-322-3019**

**211 Manitoba: Dial 211 from any phone or visit [www.mb.211.ca](http://www.mb.211.ca)**

## WINTER WEATHER RESOURCES

### Outreach Services and Resource Guides

Resource	Details
<b>Main Street Project Outreach Van</b>	<b>Areas Served:</b> City-wide <b>Hours:</b> 24/7 <b>Services:</b> Winter weather transport, wellness checks, basic needs, harm reduction supplies. <b>Contact:</b> 211 or 204-232-5217
<b>Bear Clan Patrol</b>	<b>Areas Served:</b> North/West End, West Broadway, Point Douglas <b>Hours:</b> Varies (check website) <b>Services:</b> Walking patrol, food, winter gear. <b>Contact:</b> 204-914-1708
<b>Downtown Community Safety Partnership</b>	<b>Areas Served:</b> Downtown <b>Hours:</b> 24/7 <b>Services:</b> Walking patrols, safe rides. <b>Contact:</b> 204-947-3277
<b>211 Manitoba</b>	<b>Website:</b> <a href="http://mb.211.ca">mb.211.ca</a> or dial 211 <b>Services:</b> Comprehensive database of health, government, and social services across Manitoba.
<b>Help Seeker</b>	<b>Website:</b> <a href="http://helpseeker.org">helpseeker.org</a> <b>Services:</b> Real-time resource locator for nearby support services.

# WINTER WEATHER RESOURCES (CONT'D)

## Emergency Shelters and Warming Centres

Resource	Details
N'Dinawemak	<p><b>Address:</b> 190 Disraeli <b>Hours:</b> 24/7 <b>Capacity:</b> 145 (95 beds) <b>Services:</b> Meals, showers, separate women's area, low-barrier access. <b>Contact:</b> 204-944-0055</p>
Main Street Project	<p><b>Address:</b> 637 Main St <b>Hours:</b> 24/7 <b>Capacity:</b> 120 <b>Services:</b> Meals, showers, low-barrier access. <b>Contact:</b> 204-982-8245</p>
Siloam Mission Drop-In	<p><b>Address:</b> 303 Stanley St <b>Hours:</b> 7:00 AM – 8:30 PM <b>Capacity:</b> 300+ <b>Services:</b> Meals, clothing, showers, programming, laundry, health center. <b>Contact:</b> 204-956-4344 ext. 2423</p>
JustCity: Just a Warm Sleep (Seasonal: Nov 1 – Mar 31)	<p><b>Address:</b> 107 Pulford <b>Hours:</b> 8:00 PM – 8:00 AM <b>Capacity:</b> 30 <b>Services:</b> Meals, showers, programming, pet-friendly. <b>Contact:</b> 204-817-5363</p>
Siloam Mission Winter Overnight Warming Space (Seasonal)	<p><b>Address:</b> 300 Princess St (Main Floor) <b>Hours:</b> 8:30 PM – 7:00 AM <b>Capacity:</b> 30 <b>Services:</b> Meals, showers, programming, laundry, pet-friendly (with kennel or carrier). <b>Contact:</b> 204-292-2320</p>

*Coleen Junio, Rehabilitation Counsellor -  
Transitional Services*



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- Helps protect the urethra from potential micro trauma and Urinary Tract Infections.<sup>7</sup>
- Designed to capture the right balance of naturally sourced ingredients for as natural of an intermittent catheter experience as possible.<sup>8</sup>

For more information, please call us at 1.800.263.7400 or visit us at [www.hollister.com](http://www.hollister.com)

1. Hollister Clinical Study, CLR-00647, 2021 2. Hollister Clinical Study, CLR-00647, 2021 3. Hollister Data on File, TR-00643, 2023 4. European Association of Urology Nurses (EAUN), Evidence-based Guidelines for Best Practice in Urological Health Care – Catheterisation, Urinary Intermittent in Adults Dilatation, urinary intermittent in adults (2013), pages 25, 33, 47  
5. Hollister Data on File, CL-001027 6. Hollister Data on File, CL-001015 7. European Association of Urology Nurses (EAUN), Evidence-based Guidelines for Best Practice in Urological Health Care – Catheterisation, Urinary Intermittent in Adults Dilatation, urinary intermittent in adults (2013), pages 25, 33, 47 8. Hollister Data on File, CL-001017

# A CHANGE OF CANVAS

*Laurence Haien interviews SCI Manitoba member, Ernest Vujevic*

## **Please, introduce yourself to the ParaTracks readers.**

I'm Ernest Vujevic. I'm in my early 40s, was born in the former Yugoslavia and moved to Canada on October 2, 1992 (a date I won't forget), and was raised in Transcona. Back home, my sport was swimming. I took lessons four days a week and spent my free time at the pool because the weather was a lot warmer there. Aside from that, I enjoyed sketching and pencil-art. I actually got really good and drew portraits for people in high school from photos they'd give me, which sharpened my attention to detail.

## **Before coming to Canada, how did you end up working in carpentry?**

Not long after high school, I realized that art was not going to make me any money. So, I used some of the skills I learned in art and applied them to carpentry.

### **I DIDN'T CHANGE; BUT MY CANVAS DID.**

From one project to the next, I applied the skills learned over the years, but I always felt I wanted to work on bigger, better projects: to work with the top dogs.

I joined the union and started my path to get my Red Seal ticket. It was a tough journey but fun. I met all walks of life through school and job sites, making every day memorable: the lunchroom jokes, having morning coffee near the beacon of the Human Rights Museum in midwinter, watching the morning purple sun rise when it was -40 C. For me, these blissful moments and mine and mine alone.



*Ernest Vujevic*

## **What were some of the challenges you experienced as a carpenter?**

The job did not come without its hazards. I've seen my share of workplace accidents, but I followed safety precautions, rules and regulations. I cannot say I've had any serious injuries worth mentioning. This is not to say that safety should be taken for granted because, ultimately, only you can implement your own precautions.

## **When and how did you sustain your spinal cord injury?**

Try as we might, sometimes the unexpected occurs, which brings me to my accident and how I became a quadriplegic at the age of 39.

I was just trying to install a camera to keep an eye on my truck while coming down a 12-foot ladder from an access hatch to a roof at the top of a 3-storey building staircase. It was winter. My boots were icy and the ladder was made of steel.

The ladder was at the top of the staircase, and behind the ladder was a small railing that is used when stairs terminate at the top. I slipped, then one of my hands let go followed by the other. I fell and landed on my back on top of the railing. Then my body flipped backwards. I continued my fall and hit my head on the jagged end of the steps below. This occurred early Saturday morning; I woke up confused the following Tuesday and, of course, knew life was never going to be the same.

So, I began to consider, "What do I do now?" I was always known to be arrogant, confident, down to earth and practical, which probably helped me come to terms with my new reality pretty quickly. Of course, I knew it was bad, but just how bad? Quadriplegic bad.

### **Can you talk about your hospital stay?**

I was in intensive care for only two weeks when I was told I'd be there for months before I would start physiotherapy. I insisted on speaking with the surgeon and after a heartfelt conversation, we agreed that I was ready to begin. I spent eight months at Health Sciences Centre. The experience reminded me of the movie *Shawshank Redemption*. This is the only way I can describe it. It was rough, restricted, boring, and drained the life out of me. But just like the movie, I found others and formed a group to call my own. We did not have our own library or carve little statues out of rocks, but we had our own camaraderie and collected knickknacks from

one of our lunch trays and shared them with one another. Sometimes, we shared skills like, if I dropped something on the floor, someone with a missing limb would pick it up, or, if we wanted a drink, we'd head to Garbanzos at the other end of the hospital and make a chain of wheelchairs. I would use my power chair to pull three others and get us there in seven minutes. Nothing unusual.

### **What have you learned?**

Simply put, make do with what you have and make sure you do it well. I was watching a BBC show called *Blue Planet*. I saw how a fish would use its mouth to pick up a shell and knock it against a rock repeatedly for over an hour. Later that shell broke open so the fish could have its meal. I thought, "Huh, it's not like that fish has working hands either." I think of all the species in the animal kingdom, and I'm reminded of the challenges they have to face that seem quite impossible but are overcome by ingenuity and perseverance.

### **Why did you choose project management as an alternate career?**

Through SCI Manitoba and with funding from the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) program, I was able to enroll in the project management program at Red River College Polytech -

#### **ONCE AGAIN CHANGING MY CANVAS.**

A lucrative carpentry career allowed me to take on a few managerial roles, including superintendent for a company that was constructing multiple apartment blocks. This experience opened my mind to running large scale projects. But to continue that path, I would have to be at the job site and manage the rough terrain which is just not possible with any wheelchair.

As a project manager, work can be done from home, and while it's not required, a project manager may visit a job site out of convenience. This is just one example that fits the road I'm on. The course itself is directed to all projects of all sizes because it emphasizes applying principles unique to any field. A professor once told me, "You don't have to be an electrician to be a project manager for an electrical company - but it sure helps."

You don't have to understand electrical jargon. As a project manager, it's your job to find out or find someone who does." In essence, project managers gather, facilitate and redistribute information. I have three courses left before I take my final exams, possibly next year. I'm not entirely sure what role I will play, but whatever it is, I'm going to do it, and I'll do it well.

**Do you have any final thoughts to share with the readers?**

Best of luck to everyone, and thank you for reading.



*Ernest Vujevic*



**CONGRATULATIONS ...**

to SCI Manitoba member, Alfred Knott, who recently made the difficult transition from his longtime home in Oxford House to a new apartment in Winnipeg, where he'll have better access to supports and services needed for optimal independence. Well done, Alfred!

*PHOTO (L-R): On move-in day, Becky Norman, SCI Manitoba Rehabilitation Counsellor - Indigenous Services, and Alfred Knott.*

# INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY HUB & FREE GROCERY STORE COMING TO CENTRAL WINNIPEG

A major new Indigenous community hub is taking shape in central Winnipeg. The 30,000-square-foot warehouse at 567 Notre Dame Avenue, between Kate Street and Lydia Street, is undergoing a \$14-million renovation to become Asihcikan — a Cree-Ojibwe word meaning "to put out an offering."

This collaborative project between Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and Harvest Manitoba will feature drop-in spaces, food programs, a free grocery store, community kitchens for cooking classes, laundry facilities, and training and education programs.

The free grocery store is designed to provide dignified access to food for families in need, allowing them to choose the items they want rather than receiving pre-packed hampers. The goal is to ensure more of Harvest Manitoba's food-security work is Indigenous-led and tailored to community needs.

Harvest Manitoba has already moved part of its operations into the main floor of the building, running the Meals2Go program that provides weekly meal kits to 5,000 students during the school year. The Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre is expected to move in by early 2026.

About one-third of Harvest Manitoba's clients are Indigenous, and the new hub will serve thousands of families in the Winnipeg Inner City. Intake workers will help connect families to supports, programming, and culturally relevant resources.

Funding for the project — roughly \$9 million so far - comes from a variety of partners, including the federal and provincial governments, The Winnipeg Foundation and United Way Winnipeg.

*Annika Onosson, Rehabilitation Counsellor - Indigenous Services*



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Scan the QR code with your phone or go to <https://rebrand.ly/scimanitoba-subscribe>



Like and follow us on Facebook | [www.scimanitoba.ca](http://www.scimanitoba.ca)

# 2025 E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award



This year's recipient of the E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award is the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba ('WCB Manitoba').

WCB Manitoba was established by statute (The Workers Compensation Act) many years ago to ensure workers who'd been injured on the job had access to a range of benefits while they recovered from their injuries so they could eventually return to work.

Every year, there are an average of 55 new spinal cord injuries in Manitoba, and for a small number of people, their injuries happen in the workplace. Unfortunately, some workers' injuries are so severe that they are not able to return to the same work they were doing before the injury happened. But whatever the circumstances, SCI Manitoba Rehabilitation Counsellors frequently interact with assigned case workers from WCB Manitoba to ensure members have information about, and access to, the various benefits available under the no-fault insurance scheme. As a result of this close alliance, there is a natural tendency to build strong, trusting and collaborative relationships, and this could not be better illustrated than by highlighting the excellent work done this past year and the excellent support we received from Ms. Sherry Cowan and Mr. Justin Beaudin from WCB Manitoba.

Sherry began her career at WCB Manitoba as an adjudicator in 2013 in Thompson, but soon thereafter became a case manager. For the past ten years, Sherry has been working

in the Specialized Services Unit (SSU). Justin joined WCB Manitoba in 2008 as an adjudicator, then moved on to become a case manager, then supervisor of short term claims, and finally as the manager of SSU. More recently, Justin moved to the role of director for WCB Manitoba's Fair Practices Office.

It is always a joy to work with individuals who share our values and are committed to providing the best quality of care and services to our mutual clients/members, and both Sherry and Justin have amply demonstrated those qualities when working with SCI Manitoba members.

Thank you, Justin and Sherry, and WCB Manitoba, for all your efforts over many years, and for your leadership and commitment to supporting Manitobans living with spinal cord injury in achieving greater independence, self-reliance, and full community participation.

*Dan Joannis, Executive Director*



*The 2025 E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award was presented to WCB at the Annual General Meeting on September 23, 2025. PHOTO (L-R): Lyall Hallick, Dan Joannis, Justin Beaudin, and Sherry Cowan.*

Therapy First was established in 2004 with a vision to provide quality community occupational therapy services with expertise in spinal cord injury management. Over the years, we have grown to include in-home physiotherapy for our clients with spinal cord injuries. We are proud to provide our services to Winnipeg and many communities within Manitoba.

## Our Services



### Spinal Cord Injury Community Care

Our occupational therapists can conduct a thorough assessment of your personal care needs and provide recommendations on the supports and equipment required in order to allow you to function as independently and safely as possible. Our physiotherapists can help you to develop strategies to optimize your movement and function.



### Wheelchairs and Wheelchair Seating Assessments

Our clinicians have extensive experience in the assessment and provision of all forms of wheeled mobility, commercial and custom seating, power assist devices and power/manual wheelchair skills training.



### Pressure Injury Prevention and Management

We work with clients with complex wound care and pressure management needs and consider 24-hour postural management to identify strategies to assist with treating the cause of pressure injuries.



### In Home Safety and Accessibility

Our therapists can complete home accessibility and functional assessments and provide strategies to help you do the things you want and need to do. This may include home modifications and accessibility solutions.



### Complex Rehab Technology

This is specialized equipment that might be commercially available or created and modified just for you. It includes things like environmental controls, assistive computer technology, standing devices and vehicle modifications to name a few.



### Upper Extremity Management

Our therapists can help with upper extremity function. We look at things like spasticity management, programs to increase strength and range of motion, therapeutic modalities like functional electrical stimulation (FES), Saebo, and some commercial splinting.

### Our SCI trained OT and PT team:

Corinna Klassen	OT	Elisha Watanabe	OT
Emerald Savary	OT	Lea Grant	OT
Cherry Nixdorf	OT	Ali Robinson	OT
Rudy Niebuhr	PT	Kevin Stewart	PT



# Attending AAATE2025

## Maximizing Access to Assistive Technology and Increasing Participation Globally

Early in September, I was privileged to have the opportunity to attend the AAATE2025 Conference in Nicosia, Cyprus, hosted by the Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe. As an Occupational Therapist and Clinical Service Leader for the Assistive Technology team at HSC in Winnipeg, I joined over 350 delegates from more than 40 different countries around the world to discuss all aspects of assistive technology. The theme of this year's conference was 'Technology for Inclusion and Participation for All', given that current statistics indicate less than 10% of people around the world who have a disability or a need for AT actually have access to what they need.

The conference had a mixed representation of users of assistive technology, alongside a huge array of professionals who work with assistive technology across education, research, clinical practice, and policy development.

The opening keynote speech by Kamil Gungor, a user and advocate who works as part of the European Network of Independent Living, was insightful and motivating with the clear take-away message of 'Nothing without Us'. The importance of user insight and consultation in the development of an AT product or service cannot be overstated, and when done well leads to more successful outcomes.

It was affirming to see throughout the remainder of the conference, that user



*Zoya Khan, Occupational Therapist*

involvement and consultation was very apparent in a range of presentations that I attended.

As part of my experience, I was accepted to present on behalf of our Assistive Technology Products and Services (ATPS) team about two products and services we provide for our clients in Manitoba. The first presentation focused on our in-house switch operated environmental control solution, the ECU50, whereas the second presentation was about how we use 3D printing to make AT more accessible. 3D printing has been growing in popularity, and can be an effective and lower cost tool to trial solutions that are otherwise inaccessible to many.

The sessions I attended included global discussions with panel members from different areas of the world. One particular session discussed assistive technology provision in times of crisis. What struck me during this session was that the definition of 'crisis' can be much broader than it first seems. Crisis can definitely include natural

disasters or conflict zones – but crisis can also refer to situations where living everyday is filled with barriers of a comparable level. Some countries in Europe struggle to provide accommodations that are affordable and even remotely accessible to residents, so living on the third floor of an apartment building with no elevator as a wheelchair user renders day to day living a 'crisis'. Similarly, the wildfires of Manitoba's 2025 summer season resulted in crisis for those with AT or care needs who were displaced from their home environments.

Every session I attended was captivating and I learned much, but was inspired even more. Some other Canadian projects that were presented on included: (1) an online platform to search for accessible rental accommodations; (2) a website listing accessible recreation services in Quebec with a way to connect to volunteers to assist in participating in those services; (3) a Canadian project exploring a redesign of the on-board wheelchairs used on aircraft to transfer those with mobility needs to aircraft seats; and (4) a project that developed an AT design and modification service, closely replicating the way the ATPS program operates at HSC.

Technological innovation also had its moment, with many applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) discussed. But perhaps the most engaging innovation at the conference was the power wheelchair operating software developed in Germany by HomeBrace that uses an eye-gaze sensor and AI as a driving control. The power wheelchair was driven completely by the movement of the user's eye!

The conference concluded with the 'Nicosia Declaration' being developed and signed by many international parties to "ensure accessibility, universal design and assistive technology are no longer peripheral considerations, but central pillars of inclusive, high-quality and forward-looking higher education".

Being involved in important and global discussions that impact so many people gave me many ideas for conversations that need to be continued here in Manitoba. I am hoping that we can continue some of the projects discussed to improve the way AT is accessed and used across our community – including continuing to advocate for increased funding for all kinds of AT.

I greatly appreciate the support of the Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation and SCI Manitoba that allowed me to participate in the conference and hope that with my experiences, I can continue to contribute to improving access to high quality AT for those living in Manitoba and beyond!

- Zoya Khan, OT



# Ask a Rehabilitation Counsellor



*In this issue, Rebecca Norman (Indigenous Services) respond to a reader's question about getting help for substance use, abuse, and addiction following a spinal cord injury. Questions for future issues of ParaTracks can be submitted through your rehabilitation counsellor or anonymously at [www.scimanitoba.ca/ask](http://www.scimanitoba.ca/ask).*

Living with a spinal cord injury (SCI) can bring unique challenges that affect all areas of life, including mental health and substance use. For some, alcohol or drug use becomes a coping mechanism for pain, isolation, or trauma. Finding the right source of support that understands both spinal cord injury and addiction is essential and in Manitoba, there are several inclusive and accessible resources designed to help.

Substance use among people with SCI can stem from chronic pain, loss of independence, or emotional distress. You are not alone, many people living with SCI have needed addictions support, and studies show people with SCI are at higher risk of developing substance use challenges due to physical pain and emotional adjustment after injury. Connecting with organizations that understand SCI and provide inclusive, trauma-informed care can make all the difference.

## **Supports for Alcohol and Drug Use**

### ***Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine (RAAM) Clinics:***

RAAM Clinics offer support for adults seeking help with alcohol or drug use — no referral or appointment required. These clinics provide short-term counselling, medication for withdrawal or craving management, and connections to ongoing treatment or community resources. They are designed to be trauma-informed and responsive to diverse needs, including those with mobility

challenges or rural barriers. While not designed for emergency medical or psychiatric crises, they can bridge the gap between acute care and long-term recovery programs.

*[Accessibility Note: RAAM clinics across Manitoba aim to provide accessible services, though physical accessibility may vary by location. Clients using mobility devices or requiring physical access supports are encouraged to call ahead to confirm accessibility details and current hours before attending, or visit [sharedhealthmb.ca/raam](http://sharedhealthmb.ca/raam). Virtual options such as Manitoba's Digital Front Door service are available for those who prefer or require remote access]*

### ***Winnipeg Clinics***

- Crisis Response Centre (817 Bannatyne Ave)
- River Point Centre (146 Magnus Ave)
- Aboriginal Health & Wellness Centre (181 Higgins Ave, 2nd Floor)

### ***Regional Clinics***

- Brandon (7th Street Health Access Centre, #20 – 7th Street)
- Selkirk (Selkirk Community Health Office, 237 Manitoba Ave)
- Portage la Prairie (159 – 5th Street S.E.)
- Thompson (Eaglewood Treatment Centre, 90 Princeton Drive)

### ***Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) / River Point Centre (Winnipeg)***

River Point Centre, operated by AFM and WRHA,

provides residential and community-based addictions treatment and withdrawal management. It offers programs for adults of all genders and works closely with Manitoba healthcare teams to support medical and rehabilitation coordination.

### ***Health Sciences Centre (HSC) Detoxification Unit***

Located within HSC in Winnipeg, the Adult Withdrawal Management Unit provides medically supervised detox services for individuals withdrawing from alcohol or drugs. The unit is staffed by nurses and addiction medicine physicians who monitor withdrawal symptoms and ensure safety and comfort throughout the process. This service can be an important first step before entering a treatment or recovery program. Admission is available through self-referral or referral from a healthcare provider.

### ***Aurora Recovery Centre (Gimli)***

Aurora offers inpatient and outpatient addictions treatment, including detox, counselling, and long-term recovery programming. It is a private facility but accepts some insurance coverage and may be covered under Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) for First Nations and Inuit clients.

### ***Bruce Oake Recovery Centre (Winnipeg)***

Bruce Oake offers residential addiction treatment for men and accepts NIHB coverage. Their program focuses on recovery, wellness, and long-term relapse prevention.

### **Indigenous Specific Supports**

#### ***RAAM Aboriginal Health & Wellness Centre (AHWC, 181 Higgins Ave, Winnipeg)***

AHWC offers culturally-grounded addictions counselling, harm reduction, and healing programs for Indigenous clients in Winnipeg. Intake: 204-925-3700

#### ***Eagle Urban Transition Centre (275 Portage Ave, Winnipeg)***

Provides addictions and wellness support for Indigenous people transitioning to or living in urban areas.

#### ***Native Addictions Council of Manitoba (NACM, 160 Salter Street, Winnipeg; www.nacm.ca)***

NACM offers healing-centered addictions treatment based on Indigenous cultural practices such as sharing circles, smudging, and land-based activities. Their programs focus on balance and holistic healing of mind, body, and spirit, using a strengths-based approach. The organization welcomes all Indigenous Peoples seeking support for substance use, trauma, or recovery, and creates culturally-safe spaces for healing.

#### ***Mikaaming Mino Pimatiziwin Healing Lodge (Sagkeeng First Nation)***

Offers a culturally-oriented residential treatment program for Indigenous families in rural First Nations. Intake: (204) 367-2172.

#### ***Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba***

Offers counselling and peer support for individuals adjusting to injury, including those facing addiction/mental health challenges. Counsellors can connect members to trusted addiction services and help with navigation.

### **Where to Start?**

Deciding to start the conversation can be daunting but doesn't have to be complicated. When ready, reach out to a trusted family member, friend, primary care provider, rehabilitation physician, spinal cord injury counsellor, nursing station or health centre. They can help coordinate next steps or make a warm referral to addictions supports. Remember you are not alone.

### **Emergency and Crisis Support**

If you are in crisis or need immediate help:

- Manitoba Addictions Helpline: 1-855-662-6605
- Klinik Crisis Line (24/7): 1-888-322-3019 or text 204-786-8686
- Manitoba Farm, Rural and Northern Support Services: 1-866-367-3276
- The Hope for Wellness Helpline (Indigenous specific support): 1-855-242-3310



**MPF** MANITOBA  
PARAPLEGIA  
FOUNDATION INC.

# LATEST NEWS

## MPF Trustees

**Dr. Kristine Cowley (President)**

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**Dr. Lindsay Nicolle**

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MPF funds go to work in four main areas that are not supported by other sources in Manitoba:

- special projects
- product testing
- research, and
- direct aid to Manitobans living with SCI

All requests for direct aid are initiated through SCI Manitoba. Individuals must provide information on their finances, explain why they cannot meet the expense within their own budget, and identify any other sources to support

the request, including potential for contributions from family. SCI Manitoba thanks MPF for its continued support and commitment to improving the quality of life of Manitobans living with spinal cord injury. Since the last issue of ParaTracks, financial support totaling \$41,039.56 has been granted. Some of the highlights follow:

- Financial support was provided for the purchase of a set of weights for an SCIM member to help them gain and keep arm strength while awaiting shoulder surgery, which will help with transfers and maintaining independence.
- Funding was granted for the purchase of a cup holder mount for an SCIM member's wheelchair, a smart speaker, and ear buds to voice-activate plugs and switches in the member's home.
- Funding was granted for the cost of an assessment for an SCIM member by an occupational therapist specializing in spinal cord injuries, which will allow for a custom cushion recommendation.
- Financial support was provided for an occupational therapist from Assistive Technology Products and Services (ATPS) program at Health Sciences Centre to present at the international AAATE2025 conference in Cyprus, highlighting the innovations at ATPS and open up avenues for the program to contribute directly to advancement and research benefitting people living with spinal cord injuries (for more information on the conference, please see page 22).
- Financial support was provided for the purchase of several items of equipment (wheelchair, calf pad, backrest, headrest, lap belt, cushion and a hammock/sling) that a personal care home requires in order for an SCIM member to safely participate in daily life, and reduce their risk of pressure injuries.

- Funding was granted for the purchase of equipment (shower/commode wheelchair and a bed and mattress) for an SCIM member to support independence with showering and self-care and increased safety with transfers, bed mobility and activities of daily living.
- Funding was provided for the cost of an SCIM member's custom wheelchair foot plate for proper leg positioning and preventing uneven pressure on their feet. This will help protect their skin integrity and improve overall safety and comfort in their wheelchair.
- Financial support was provided for a manual wheelchair, cushion and backrest for an SCIM member who has primarily used a power wheelchair, but the manual wheelchair will serve as a rehabilitation tool, allowing the member to continue rebuilding strength and endurance, and enhance independence, self-reliance and quality of life.
- Funding was granted for the purchase of a power seat elevation, a joystick mount and backrest for an SCIM member's wheelchair to help reduce the risk of pressure injury and allow the member to maintain their employment.
- Financial support was provided for emergency lodging in a boarding home for an SCIM member who is waiting for housing support after being evacuated from their home community a few months ago due to wildfires. This emergency assistance will help keep the member mentally and physically safe while waiting for alternate arrangements.
- Funding was granted for the cost of a transfer bench, tub bar, 4-wheeled walker, long handle sponge and raised toilet seat for an SCIM member. These items will greatly enhance the member's safety and independence with mobility and self-care which will promote dignity, self-confidence and higher quality of life as they continue their rehabilitation.

*Visit MPF's website for more information at [www.scimanitoba.ca/mpf](http://www.scimanitoba.ca/mpf).  
Information about applying for assistance is available by contacting SCI Manitoba.*

## Doug Finkbeiner, K.C. & Jim Richardson



*Doug Finkbeiner (L) received the Merit Award from SCI Manitoba, presented by Art Braid, in 2018.*

For the last 45 years, two of the Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation's original trustees have quietly worked in the background to ensure the long term viability of this critical resource, both for Manitobans with SCI and for the research that aims to advance their interests.

For their leadership, steady guidance, wise counsel, and untiring efforts, we thank Doug Finkbeiner, K.C. and Jim Richardson, who retired from the MPF board of trustees on October 1, 2025.



*Jim Richardson (L) received the Merit Award from SCI Manitoba, presented by Art Braid, in 2016.*

**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).

**PLEASE ENTER MEMBERSHIP FOR:**

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CITY:  PROV:

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**I wish to select the following category of Membership:**

- MEMBER \$15 - \$24
- SUPPORTING MEMBER \$25 - \$99
- SUSTAINING MEMBER: \$100 - \$249
- CHARTER MEMBER: \$250 - \$499
- PATRON MEMBER: \$500 AND OVER

All Monies donated remain in Manitoba to support SCI Manitoba. 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

*Make cheque payable to: Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba  
Mail to: 825 Sherbrook Street, Winnipeg MB R3A 2M5*

**IMPORTANT!**

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.