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1. De Ridder, D. J. M. K., Everaert, K., Fernández, L. G., Valero, J. F., Durán, A. B., Abrisqueta, M. J., ... & Sotillo, A. R. (2005). Intermittent catheterisation with hydrophilic-coated catheters (SpeediCath) reduces the risk of clinical urinary tract infection in spinal cord injured patients: a prospective randomised parallel comparative trial. *European urology*, 48(6), 991-995.

2. Cardenas, D. D., Moore, K. N., Dannels-McClure, A., Scelza, W. M., Graves, D. E., Brooks, M., & Busch, A. K. (2011). Intermittent catheterization with a hydrophilic-coated catheter delays urinary tract infections in acute spinal cord injury: a prospective, randomized, multicenter trial. *PM&R*, 3(5), 408-417.

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ON THE COVER

Member and this year's
E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba
Merit Award recipient,
George Loewen (seated).
See article on p. 6

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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MPF

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ANNOUNCEMENTS!!



If you have news to share with SCI Manitoba and the readers of ParaTracks, please contact us at info@scimanitoba.ca.



Congratulations to SCI Manitoba member Gio Calixto, who graduated from Red River College Polytech in June 2026 with a Graphic Design Diploma.

Gio's education was supported by the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) program. If you're interested in pursuing education and/or employment, please contact your assigned rehabilitation counsellor or Laurence Haien, Acting Director of Rehabilitation Services, at 204.202.8334 or by email at lhaien@scimanitoba.ca.

In April 2026, with partial financial assistance from the Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation (MPF), several occupational therapists from HSC Winnipeg's SCI Rehabilitation Program attended the Prairie Seating Workshop, hosted by Therapy First.

Several of the attendees contributed to articles in this issue of ParaTracks:

- 'Try Before You Buy' on page 9
- 'Manual Wheelchair User Guide' on page 23

For more information about MPF and how it supports Manitobans living with SCI, see page 18.



*Back row (from L-R): Anastasia, Ali, Sherry, Kelly, Monica, and Nathan
Front row: Kamille, Anna, Zoya, and Liezl.*

Welcome **Scott Shabaga** Peer Support Coordinator



My name is Scott Shabaga and I am excited to join SCI Manitoba in the position of Peer Support Coordinator. I had a spinal cord injury more than 26 years ago and

this led to my connection with SCI Manitoba, which provided invaluable support during a turbulent time in my life when major changes were happening.

What made the greatest difference, though, was learning that I wasn't alone. I met staff and later peer supporters through the Social Club who

understood what I was going through, gave me hope and helped me see what was possible. This also inspired me to want to give back and help others feel supported and connected.

Prior to joining SCI Manitoba I spent ten years as a college tutor and the best part was being there to help students learn and grow, gain confidence, and recognize emerging abilities within themselves. Those experiences reinforced my belief that people thrive when they feel welcome, respected, included and understood. I look forward to using my professional and lived experience to help members connect and live their best lives. My hope is that, together, we can continue building a peer support community where everyone feels welcome, understood, and never has to face their journey with SCI alone.

Welcome (back) **Darell Hominuk** Vocational Services

Hi folks! My name is Darell Hominuk and I'm happy to be back at Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba as a Rehabilitation Counsellor in Vocational Services! You may remember working with me from 2022 to 2024.

As a seasoned professional with extensive experience in rehabilitation and counselling, I enjoy supporting people with disabilities to plan and achieve their vocational goals. Brokering skills training and employment opportunities are among the things I enjoy most!

I feel privileged to work with such a reputable team and to fulfill my commitment to contribute to the well being of the individuals I support. In addition, I have significant senior leadership

experience in program development, service delivery and government relations initiatives within the health charity field.



My career has been dedicated toward the social sciences, and I remain passionate about helping people with spinal cord injuries achieve financial stability and independence through employment, and I look forward to connect with the members of SCI Manitoba in the coming weeks and months.

2026 E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award

This year's recipient of the E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award is SCI Manitoba member George Loewen.

George sustained a spinal cord injury in a cycling accident during the summer of 2019 and after spending several months in hospital recovering and learning to live with incomplete tetraplegia, he returned home but soon was yearning to get outdoors again - something he thoroughly enjoyed prior to the accident.

George's desire to resume an active lifestyle as a wheelchair user led him to begin visiting leisure and recreation facilities in his community. But what began as a personal effort to overcome the barriers in his own life eventually evolved into a much larger project. He gathered information and kept detailed records of each place he visited so that he could create a central repository of resources for other wheelchair users, and this was the genesis of the Wheelchair Adventures Manitoba website (www.wheelchairmanitoba.ca).

The E. Arthur Braid Merit Award is given out annually to an individual or group who has



SCI Manitoba member, George Loewen, founder of Wheelchair Adventures Manitoba

demonstrated a longstanding commitment to improving the welfare of Manitobans living with SCI, and George is precisely the kind of individual this award is meant to recognize. Congratulations!

The SCI Manitoba Family extends its sympathies to the families of the following loved ones who have passed away:

*Mile Cindric
Robert Colomb
Solomon Constant
Carla Dunphy
Daniel Eschmann
Janet Flynn
Gordon Harding*

*Henry Islay
Raymond Joyal
Marcel Kozak
Jesse Lalonde
Jasbit Maan
Mike McCaughan
Gordon Pahpasay*

*Ronald Raill
Grant Sparrow
James Stewart
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Making a Difference in the Journey of Life

CELEBRATING ONE YEAR OF SOCIAL CLUB

SCI Manitoba's Social Club recently celebrated its one-year anniversary — a milestone that represents connection, community, and belonging for Manitobans living with spinal cord injuries.

Social Club began with a simple seed: recognizing the need for greater social connection among members experiencing isolation and loneliness. From that seed grew a small idea: creating a space where members could gather, build relationships, and feel connected. What started as "Social Tuesday" in spring 2025 has continued to grow and evolve through the voices and experiences of our members, becoming the Social Club we know today.

After one year, that seed has become a sapling — a young tree beginning to establish its roots, grow stronger, and preparing for the seasons ahead. Through the dedication of members, staff, community partners, and supporters, Social Club continues to create a welcoming space where people feel valued, included, and part of a community. Looking ahead, SCI Manitoba hopes to continue nurturing this growth by connecting Social Club with our Peer Support Program and expanding opportunities for Manitobans living with SCI to experience connection and full community participation.

Thank you to everyone who has helped nurture this young tree. Together, we hope to see Social Club and peer-based services grow into an emerging and resilient network of trees, that continually generate new branches of connection, reaches more individuals, and provides a place of belonging for years to come. Happy one year anniversary, Social Club!

- Coleen Junio, Rehabilitation Counsellor



If you're interested in joining or learning more about the Social Club and/or the Peer Support Program, please contact Scott Shabaga, Peer Support Coordinator, by email at sshabaga@scimanitoba.ca or by phone at 204.202.8350.

Try Before You Buy

Why Equipment Trials Matter

By Anastasia Pasieczka and Zoya Khan

Assistive technologies or adaptive equipment can be an essential component of daily life when living with a spinal cord injury. However, navigating all the equipment options can often feel overwhelming. You could be considering a new wheelchair with a backrest and cushion, a tool for daily living that assists you with eating or dressing or even transfer equipment.

To ensure that the choice you make is the right one for you, one of the most important steps is to do a trial of the equipment options before you make your final decision.

You may have heard different terms used by healthcare providers such as equipment assessment, evaluation or simulation. All these terms essentially meet the same goal: finding the equipment option that is safe, effective, comfortable and most appropriate for you.

Why is trialing equipment important?

1. Everyone's needs and bodies are different: Every person differs in a multitude of ways such as their strength, skin health, pain, movement, caregiver or additional support and home environment. There is no equipment that fits into the "one size fits all" category. All these factors affect how we use the equipment, what material is chosen for durability, how long you plan on using it, and more.
2. Comfort is not measured on paper: The pros and cons of the equipment should always be discussed with your healthcare provider in clinic or community. However, talking about it is not as valuable as using it, which will tell you if it really is



comfortable, safe for your routines or practical for you or your caregiver to use.

3. Feedback opportunity: When working alongside your healthcare provider to trial the equipment, you can let them know what worked well when using it, or alternatively if it did not work for you. This provides an opportunity to explore if the option needs modifications or if a different option is needed. Your honest feedback can make sure your healthcare provider is recommending equipment that fits your needs and wants.
4. Preventing costly mistakes: Equipment is not cheap and it is typically difficult to exchange it after it's purchased, especially if it is customized. Trialing the equipment avoids delays, additional expenses to modify it after the fact, frustration and dissatisfaction in the product after you bought it.

What are the risks of not trialing equipment?

1. Risk of pain or self-injury: Hurting yourself is quite common if your equipment works against you. For example, not trialing your wheelchair cushion for proper pressure relief properties could lead to a pressure injury. Or reusing a long-handed reacher that is too short could lead to falls, pain and discomfort each day when you dress or pick something up.

2. Overall less independence: A trial minimizes the risk of purchasing equipment that doesn't work for you, makes things more difficult, or gets abandoned over time. With the wrong equipment, you may have to rely more heavily on your caregivers for assistance, and it could also reduce the time you spend participating in meaningful activities.

3. Waste of money: Receiving equipment that doesn't work for you can lead to wasted funds/resources and delays in receiving the appropriate equipment, which can contribute to increased stress and frustration.

Be your own advocate and ask for a trial

You are the expert on what works for you! Your healthcare provider and vendors may have recommendations but your lived experience, preferences and goals matter. Asking questions and taking the time to request trials is all part of the process of participating in your care. If a trial was not offered, you could consider asking:

- Is there an opportunity to trial or arrange a setup of this option before I purchase it?
- Any alternative products that I can compare to this option?
- Can I trial this equipment in my home or in the community for a period?

Trialing equipment is essential before buying it so that you can decide if it is right for you. Put that backrest behind your back. Try out that fork during your next meal. Transfer on that sliding board. You have the right to ask questions, look into alternative options, and evaluate how it will impact your independence and satisfaction once you own it.



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Beyond Physical Injury

The Essential Role of the Rehabilitation Counsellor

One of the first questions I often hear from members isn't about their diagnosis or even their physical recovery. Instead, it's a quiet, deeply personal question:

What will my life look like now?

It's a question that speaks to far more than mobility or medical treatment. It reflects uncertainty about identity, relationships, work, independence, and the future. Behind those simple words lies a person trying to make sense of a life that has radically changed in an instant.

As the Rehabilitation Counsellor – Hospital Services with Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba, I have the privilege of walking alongside individuals and families during some of the most challenging moments of their lives. While rehabilitation is often associated with physical recovery — regaining strength, learning new skills, or adapting to changes in function — we know that healing extends far beyond what we can measure in a therapy session.

The emotional and psychological impact of a spinal cord injury or other life-altering illness or injury is often invisible. Feelings of grief, anxiety, depression, fear, and uncertainty may not be readily apparent, yet they can profoundly influence a person's recovery. These invisible challenges deserve the same attention and compassion as the physical aspects of rehabilitation.

As rehabilitation counsellors, we are uniquely positioned to support members as they navigate this adjustment. Sometimes that means helping them access practical resources or plan for discharge. Other times, it simply means sitting



with them, listening without judgment, and helping them begin to answer that question:

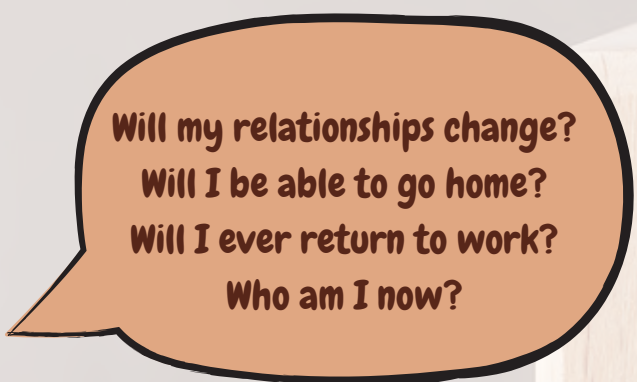
What will my life look like now?

The answer is rarely immediate, and it is never one-size-fits-all. But through compassionate, person-centred care, we can help members discover that while life may look different, it can still be meaningful, purposeful, and full of possibility.

Looking Beyond the Diagnosis

A spinal cord injury changes life in an instant — not only for the individual, but often for their family and support system as well. The focus in the acute care setting is understandably on medical stabilization and physical healing.

Yet while healthcare professionals are monitoring neurological recovery, preventing complications, and developing rehabilitation goals, members are often grappling with questions that are much harder to answer:



**Will my relationships change?
Will I be able to go home?
Will I ever return to work?
Who am I now?**

These questions reflect the emotional and psychological adjustments that accompany life-changing injuries. They remind us that recovery is about much more than restoring physical function; it is about helping individuals rebuild their lives.

The Invisible Impact of Spinal Cord Injury

No two people experience a spinal cord injury in the same way. Every person's story, coping style, support network, and goals are unique. Yet many members experience emotional responses that are not immediately visible. These may include:

- Grief over the loss of previous abilities or independence.
- Anxiety about an uncertain future.
- Depression during the adjustment process.
- Changes in family, parenting, or relationship roles.
- Concerns about employment and financial stability.
- Fear of becoming dependent on others.
- Loss of confidence or uncertainty about personal identity.

These reactions are not signs of weakness. They are natural responses to profound life changes. Acknowledging these experiences allows members to understand that emotional recovery

is an important—and expected—part of rehabilitation.

Creating Space for Healing

One of the greatest privileges of my role is creating space for conversations that often do not happen elsewhere.

Members frequently tell me they feel they need to be "strong" for their families or focus solely on physical progress. Yet healing also requires permission to acknowledge grief, frustration, fear, and uncertainty.

Rehabilitation counselling is not about taking away difficult emotions or offering simple solutions. Instead, it is about meeting people where they are, listening with empathy, identifying strengths, exploring hopes and goals, and helping members reconnect with a sense of purpose.

Some days our conversations focus on practical matters—community resources, financial supports, vocational planning, or discharge preparation. Other days, they are simply about sitting together and recognizing that what someone is experiencing is both real and valid. Often, those conversations become the foundation upon which future rehabilitation is built.

Recovery Is More Than Physical Independence

Healthcare professionals often measure progress through functional outcomes: transfers, wheelchair skills, mobility, activities of daily living, or independence with self-care. These milestones are important and deserve to be celebrated.

However, members may define recovery differently.

Recovery may mean attending a child's hockey game, returning to meaningful employment, sharing a meal with friends, travelling again, participating in adaptive sports, volunteering in the community, or simply feeling hopeful about the future.



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Success cannot always be measured by what someone can do independently. Sometimes it is measured by renewed confidence, meaningful relationships, newly developed skills in directing others, community participation, and discovering new possibilities.

As rehabilitation professionals, our role is to help members recognize that, although life may look different, it can still be deeply fulfilling.

The Importance of Interdisciplinary Care

Supporting invisible disabilities is not the responsibility of one discipline alone.

Physicians, nurses, physical and occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, speech-language pathologists, recreation therapists, peer supporters, and rehabilitation counsellors each contribute valuable expertise to the rehabilitation journey.

Rehabilitation counsellors bring a unique perspective by addressing the psychosocial aspects of recovery alongside practical issues such as community reintegration, vocational planning, advocacy, and navigating available supports.

When emotional well-being is recognized as an essential component of rehabilitation, members are better equipped to engage in therapy, build resilience, and prepare for life beyond the hospital.

Looking Forward

Recovery following a spinal cord injury is rarely linear. There are days filled with progress and hope, and others marked by frustration, grief, or uncertainty. Both are part of the journey. One question, however, remains remarkably consistent:

What will my life look like now?

As rehabilitation counsellors, we cannot predict exactly what the future will hold for our members.

What we can offer is compassion, guidance, advocacy, and hope.

We can help members recognize that, while life may not look the way they once imagined, it can still be rich with purpose, joy, meaningful relationships, and new opportunities.

Ultimately, rehabilitation is about more than restoring function.

It is about restoring possibility.

If You or Someone You Know Is Struggling

Recovery from a spinal cord injury or other life-changing illness or injury can be emotionally overwhelming. Feelings of grief, anxiety, depression, or hopelessness are more common than many people realize. Reaching out for support is a sign of strength, and help is available. Support does not always have to begin with a healthcare professional - talking openly with a trusted family member, friend, or partner can be an important first step. The people closest to us often want to help but may not know how. Sharing your thoughts and feelings can strengthen those relationships and remind you that you do not have to face recovery alone.

For immediate mental health support in Manitoba:

- Call or text 9-8-8 to reach Canada's Suicide Crisis Helpline, available 24/7
- Manitoba Suicide Prevention & Support Line: 1-877-435-7170
- Klinik Crisis Line: 204-786-8686 or toll-free 1-888-322-3019 (24/7 confidential support)
- Call 2-1-1 for mental health and addictions services in more than 170 languages

Remember, you do not need to wait until you are in crisis to ask for help. Recovery is not something you have to navigate alone.

- Natasha Schreyer

Rehabilitation Counsellor – Hospital Services

The Gold Standard

An interview by Laurence Haien, SCI Manitoba Rehabilitation Counsellor, Vocational Services, with member Rox-Anne Shore

Rox-Anne, could you tell the readers a little about yourself?

Well, I was born and raised in Winnipeg. I was adopted. As an adolescent, I played many sports, high jump, ran the 400-meter relay, and participated in Winnipeg's first varsity basketball and volleyball programs. I was competitive. I was also academically inclined and motivated to perform to the best of my ability. My life has been hard, though; I've experienced many challenges. I have 10 children. School was always important to me and an anchor. With the help of Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba, I was able to attend school and recently got my university degree, a longtime dream.

Could you talk about your spinal cord injury and how it affects you?

I was diagnosed with a C-04, complete spinal cord injury in 2018, the result of an abscess. I can move my left, dominant arm but not my right arm. I can turn my head. I require assistance with all of the activities of daily living and have 7 – 8 home care attendant calls daily. I need help with transfers, bathing, dressing, grooming and set up for my meals. Although I'm able to eat independently, I prefer to have assistance because I like to stay clean and not make a mess. I use a power wheelchair for mobility.

Last year, I developed a urinary tract infection, became septic and was hospitalized. From that experience, I learned the importance of remaining hydrated. I drink up to three litres of water daily and found cranberry pills and probiotics to be helpful in keeping my bladder and kidneys healthy. Additionally, I was involved in a fire several years ago and lost three fingers on my left dominant

hand and recently underwent a second surgery on my right hand because of contractures, some of my fingers digging into others. They had to be straightened and separated. My hand will be casted for the next six weeks while I heal. The cast is heavy so I wear a sling when I'm up in my chair to support my hand and arm.

I've had pressure ulcers on my buttocks for several years. A wound care nurse attends daily. I was recently told that surgery was not an option. I also have a pressure injury on my heel. I experience daily pain and take over-the-counter medication for its management. I've mostly been on bed rest for the last three weeks, which is very difficult and boring.

You recently graduated from the University of Winnipeg with a bachelor's degree with a major in political science. Could you tell the readers about your experience at university?

I began my studies in 2022. As I said, my vocational counsellor at SCI Manitoba was able to secure educational sponsorship for me through Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD). The sponsorship covered my tuition, books, transportation, and other educational costs. I attended university part-time because of my limited physical stamina and sitting tolerance. I usually took three courses per term and one course during the summer intersession.

Did you have any concerns about attending university, being an older student, having a disability?

None. I mostly felt excited. It was wonderful! I felt no fear or hesitation. My priority was always to

achieve an A in all of my courses which I did, except for three courses in which I got Bs.

Did you connect with educational support services to address your disability-related needs?

Yes, and did so mostly to address accessibility needs. I also received tutoring through them, additional time to take my exams, and they would proof read my essays before I submitted them. I had the option to use voice-activated software to reduce my reliance on keyboarding but found the software didn't really work for me and that I was able to keyboard well enough. Many of the professors posted their notes and slides from class on line which was helpful. Sometimes there was a note-taker in class, too.

Did you experience any challenges while attending university?

One challenge is that I prefer to be as independent as possible and would have liked to have taken regular transit to university, but because the sidewalks and bus stops are not regularly cleaned during the winter, I had to rely on Transit Plus.

Originally, I considered declaring psychology as my major but found the multiple-choice exams to be very tricky, and I performed less well than I would like. I took a political science course during my first year, loved the material, and achieved an A. So, I declared political science as my major. The political science courses involved essays, and the exams were sometimes open-book, completed at home and a combination of short answer and essay, which is my strength.

Another challenge occurred in my last term. My laptop computer was dropped and broke. Thankfully, EAPD covered the cost for a replacement computer. It would have taken too long to get the repair done and I needed my computer daily, and in any case the cost for repair didn't make it worthwhile.



SCI Manitoba member Rox-Anne Shore

Where you able to develop relationships with the other students?

Not really. I'm an introvert and more of a loner. I engaged other students if I required some physical assistance, such as asking them to assist with my coat. Also, there were times when we had to do group work. Otherwise, I had little contact with other students. With the professors, I always sat at the front of the class, participated in class discussions, and made my presence known.

Knowing what you know now is there anything you would have done differently in university?

Not really. My goal was to perform to the best of my ability, and I have. I'm grateful that I switched from declaring psychology as my major to political science.

Tell me about your graduation?

Shortly after I completed my course work in April, 2026, I was notified by the university that I had maintained the highest-grade point average in political science (3.74) and was to be the recipient of the gold medal. My mother, daughter, and son attended my graduation ceremony. There were Indigenous drummers performing. I bawled my

eyes out. It hit me spiritually. I mentioned earlier that I was adopted. Well, I had connected years ago with my birth father and still have contact with him. I discovered that my paternal great grandmother was fully Indigenous and was descended from the Cross-Lake Cree. I have much respect for my heritage.

What are your future goals?

Not too much for the immediate future because of my recent hand surgery, my pressure sores, and the fact that my sitting tolerance is greatly diminished.

Eventually, I hope to pursue a law degree. I have always had respect for the letter of the law. EAPD is considering my interest in pursuing law but have yet to decide. If law school is not an option, then I will pursue employment that relates

to my political science degree.

Additionally, I want to become involved with the NDP because I would like to petition for a change to the age of majority - I think 18 years old is too young to be considered an adult. Some of the choices I made early in my life have continued to exert a profound and negative impact on my life.

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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. MPF is a funder of last resort and 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 contributions from family. SCI Manitoba thanks MPF for its continued support and

commitment to improving the quality of life for Manitobans living with spinal cord injury. Since the last issue of ParaTracks in spring 2026, financial support totaling \$27,420 has been granted, including:

- Financial support was provided for the short-term rental of a wheelchair and backrest for an SCIM member who was being discharged from hospital and needed a wheelchair that would provide adequate support until their permanent wheelchair arrived.
- Funding was granted for occupational therapy assessments for three SCIM members who do not have access to occupational therapy services in their northern communities. These assessments will assist the members with obtaining new equipment in order to maintain their health while remaining independent in their communities.
- Funding was provided for the purchase of a wheelchair back support system for an SCIM member to improve postural support and enable them to resume their daily activities and independent mobility.
- Financial support was provided for the purchase of a cushion and backrest for an SCIM member to improve postural support, reduce pain and protect against skin breakdown.
- Funding was provided for the cost of a shower commode, cushion and backrest for an SCIM member to allow them to shower safely, preserve their skin integrity and mobilize independently within their home and community.
- Financial support was provided for the purchase of a shower commode for an SCIM member to shower safely and promote independence with their daily routines.
- Funding was granted for the purchase of a cushion and backrest for an SCIM member to assist with continued healing of their pressure ulcer once discharged from hospital.
- Financial support was provided for the purchase of a walker which would allow an SCIM member to access the bathroom in their apartment and optimize independence in accessing their community.

*Information about applying for MPF assistance
is available by contacting SCI Manitoba.*

A Home Away from Home

Indigenous Medical Boarding Homes in Winnipeg



Mamawi WSN Wellness Centre

For many people living in rural and northern First Nations communities, travelling to Winnipeg for healthcare is simply a part of life. Whether for surgery, specialist appointments, rehabilitation, diagnostic testing, or ongoing treatment, being away from home often brings many questions and concerns: Where will I stay? Will it be accessible? How will I get to my appointments? Will I have the support I need?

For people living with spinal cord injuries, these concerns can feel daunting. Accessible accommodations, transportation, mobility equipment, nutritious meals, and supportive surroundings all play an important role in making the journey as comfortable and stress-free as possible.

Fortunately, Winnipeg is home to three Indigenous-led medical boarding homes that are helping answer those questions:

- Pimicikamak Wellness Centre, 621 Balmoral
- Pimicikamak Place, 698 Portage Avenue
- Mamawi WSN Wellness, 1400 Notre Dame

Although each location offers its own unique environment and services, they all share a common goal: providing safe accommodations where guests can focus on healing while remaining connected to culture, community, and practical supports.

Pimicikamak Wellness Centre

For decades, the Balmoral Hotel was one of Winnipeg's most recognizable buildings. Over time, it became associated with deteriorating conditions and the social challenges affecting the neighborhood. Today, the building tells a different story. Following an extensive transformation, the former hotel has become the Pimicikamak Wellness Centre, providing comfortable medical boarding accommodations for First Nations members travelling to Winnipeg for healthcare.

The Centre offers comfortable guest rooms, nutritious meals, transportation to medical appointments, accessible accommodations upon request, family rooms, and 24-hour security, creating a safe environment where guests can focus on their health and recovery. The transformation represents more than just a renovated building. It reflects a vision of creating a place where dignity, respect, and wellness are the focus of every guest's experience.

One of the organizations providing programming within the Wellness Centre is 1JustCity. Through its community space within the building, 1JustCity offers a variety of programs and supports for guests and community members. Programming may include community meals, hot lunches, housing and resource navigation, Indigenous cultural programming, sharing circles, drumming,



Photos of the new Pimicikamak Wellness Centre on Balmoral Street

chair yoga, medicine walks, Indigenous bingo, financial empowerment programming, wellness activities, and visits from community partners including Harvest Manitoba, Sara Riel, chiropractors, and other outreach organizations.

Programming evolves throughout the year to reflect community interests and needs, creating opportunities for guests and community members to connect, build relationships, and access practical supports. Combining accommodations, community services, healthcare, and cultural programming helps Pimicikamak Wellness Centre demonstrate that healing extends beyond medical treatment alone. It is a place where guests can find not only a safe place to stay, but opportunities to connect with others, access valuable community resources, and experience a welcoming environment while receive care away from home.

Pimicikamak Place

As the need for Indigenous medical boarding homes grew, Pimicikamak Place was established to expand access for First Nations members travelling to Winnipeg for healthcare. This fully accessible facility offers comfortable accommodations designed to support individuals and families during their stay. Guests have access to nutritious meals, transportation to medical

appointments, accessible rooms, and a supportive environment that recognizes the challenges associated with travelling away from home.

Pimicikamak Place is also home to Shared Health's Alternative Integrated Accommodation (AIA) Program. This innovative referral-based program provides short-term accommodations for people who no longer require acute hospital care but benefit from a supportive healthcare environment before returning home or transitioning to another stage of recovery.

The program helps bridge the gap between hospital and home by offering a safe environment where individuals can continue healing while receiving coordinated supports. By providing an alternative to remaining in hospital, the AIA Program supports recovery while helping people transition safely back to their homes and communities.

For people living with spinal cord injuries, the fully accessible design makes Pimicikamak Place an excellent option when additional recovery time or coordinated care is needed before they return home. Its combination of accessibility, supportive accommodations, and healthcare partnerships make it an important resource within Manitoba's continuum of care.



Photos of Pimicikamak Place on Portage Avenue

Mamawi WSN Wellness Centre

Formerly the Travelodge Winnipeg, Mamawi WSN Wellness Centre has been thoughtfully transformed into a welcoming wellness and accommodation centre that serves people from across Manitoba, particularly those travelling from rural and northern Indigenous communities.

Guests remain there while attending medical appointments, receiving treatment, supporting hospitalized family members, or recovery before returning home. The facility works closely with communities and programs, such as Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) and Jordan's Principle to coordinate accommodations and transportation.

Each stay includes comfortable hotel-style rooms, three nutritious meals daily, transportation assistance to medical appointments, airport transportation, and a welcoming environment that recognizes the importance of culture, community, and family. Beyond accommodations, Mamawi WSN Wellness helps connect guests with Indigenous housing supports, community resources, and wellness services. Healing extends

beyond medical appointments, and the team places a strong emphasis on creating opportunities for connection and community.

Mamawi WSN Wellness Centre also offers daily programming and guests are encouraged to participate in complimentary activities designed to reduce isolation and foster wellness. Depending on the day's schedule, activities may include traditional drumming, bannock making, beading, dreamcatcher making, bingo, card tournaments, movie nights, scavenger hunts, seasonal celebrations, and other cultural and recreational opportunities. These programs provide opportunities to build friendships, celebrate culture, learn new skills, and enjoy meaningful experiences while away from home.

Accessibility continues to be an important priority. The installation of lifts is planned for the swimming pool and dining areas, allowing guests with mobility restrictions, including individuals with SCI, to enjoy these spaces more independently. Until those improvements are completed, meals are delivered directly to the rooms of individuals who cannot access the dining area.

More Than a Place to Stay

Although each organization has its own unique focus, all three share a common goal: ensuring people travelling to Winnipeg for healthcare are welcomed with dignity, compassion, and practical support.

For people living with SCI, accessible accommodations, transportation, nutritious meals, cultural connection, knowledgeable staff, and opportunities to engage with others can make a significant difference during what is often a stressful time away from home.

Travelling for healthcare can be challenging, but no one should have to face that journey alone. Whether someone is travelling from a rural or

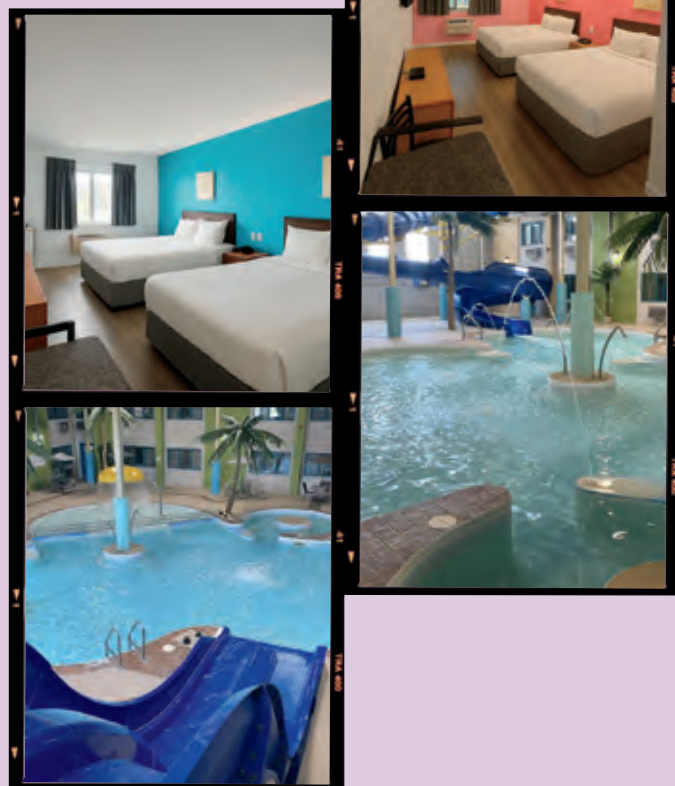
northern First Nations community for surgery, rehabilitation, specialist care, or ongoing treatment, having a safe and supportive place to stay can make all the difference.

Together, the Pimicikamak Wellness Centre, Pimicikamak Place, and Mamawi WSN Wellness Centre help ensure that people arriving in Winnipeg are welcomed, not only with comfortable accommodations but with respect, cultural connection, accessibility, and the support they need to focus on health and healing.

Planning Your Stay

If you are planning to travel to Winnipeg for healthcare and would like more information about boarding accommodations, accessibility, or available supports, speak with your healthcare team, community health representative, your Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) coordinator, or your Rehabilitation Counsellor at Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba.

- Rebecca Norman, Rehabilitation Counsellor - Indigenous Services



Photos of Mamawi WSN Wellness Centre



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MANUAL WHEELCHAIR USER GUIDE

OPTIMIZING PROPULSION, POSITIONING, AND UPPER EXTREMITY HEALTH

BY HSC INPATIENT AND OUTPATIENT SCI OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS NATHAN LO, KELLY MARK AND SHERRY KAMINSKI

Individuals who use manual wheelchairs (MWC) full-time spend the vast majority of their active hours seated and propelling in their chair, creating repetitive demand on the upper extremities—specifically the shoulders, wrists, and hands. Unlike able-bodied individuals who distribute functional load across the entire body, full-time wheelchair users rely exclusively on their upper limbs for mobility, transfers, and daily activities.

This chronic overuse carries significant clinical consequences. Upper extremity pain and strain affect up to 76% of MWC users with spinal cord injuries, with common presentations including rotator cuff degeneration, shoulder impingement syndrome, tendonitis, bursitis, and carpal tunnel syndrome. These conditions, if left unaddressed, may compromise independence and quality of life. In addition to wheelchair set-up, proper propulsion technique is equally important in decreasing repetitive use strain and improving overall mobility.

As a manual wheelchair user, here are some key tips to consider:

WHEELCHAIR MAINTENANCE

General Wheelchair Care

- Inspect your wheelchair regularly for wear and tear and signs of damage, such as loose nuts and bolts.
- Listen and feel for irregular noises and vibrations during use.
- Keep your wheelchair clean and dry, and have it serviced regularly.

Rear Wheels (Drive Wheels)

- If you have pneumatic tires, ensure they are properly inflated to the PSI indicated on the



sidewall of the tire. An underinflated tire will make propelling significantly more difficult.

- Determine whether a flat tire has a puncture or simply requires reinflation.
- If your wheel locks are not fully engaging, always check tire pressure first, as poor lock engagement is often a sign of underinflation.
- Check pneumatic tire inflation weekly and twice per week in winter.
- From the front of the wheelchair, ensure the rear wheels are aligned symmetrically and pointing straight ahead, not angled inward or outward. Misaligned wheels cause uneven tire wear, pulling to one side, and propulsion difficulty that increases the risk of upper extremity injury.

Front Casters

- Inspect your front casters for hair or debris stuck or wrapped around the hub. To remove it, use small scissors, a seam ripper, or, if able, remove the caster entirely.
- If the chair is veering, ensure your footplate is

level, your front casters are squared, and your bearings are in good condition. If you are unable to address this yourself, have your wheelchair serviced by your local vendor.

WHEELCHAIR SET-UP

How your wheelchair is set up and configured can have a large impact on how well you are able to propel and complete wheelchair skills such as navigating ramps, cross slopes, thresholds, curbs, and uneven terrain.

Positioning and Axle Placement

View yourself from the side in a mirror. With your arms dangling naturally, check the position of your middle finger. Ideally, your middle finger should align with the rear wheel axle—this is a good starting point for optimal push rim access.

Place your hand at the top center of the rear wheel. Your elbow should be bent to approximately 100–120 degrees. If your elbow is too straight, generating a strong push becomes very difficult. If your elbow is too bent, the shoulders hike up, similarly reducing push strength. Either extreme indicates the wheelchair is not ideally configured for you.

Posture

An upright posture is optimal for propulsion. If the trunk is leaning forward or to the side, or if the pelvis is tilted forward, backward, or higher on one side, propelling becomes more difficult. Try repositioning yourself first. If this does not help, it may indicate that it is time for a seating and postural assessment by an occupational therapist.

A thorough assessment will evaluate your posture in your current wheelchair as well as your posture, flexibility, and tone outside of it. This information will inform the appropriate type, size, and configuration of the wheelchair, and the selection and interfacing of the cushion and backrest.

Propulsion

People propel a manual wheelchair in different ways: using the upper extremities, foot propulsion, or a combination of both. The method you use will influence how the wheelchair should be set up.

- **Foot propulsion**: The floor-to-seat height must be lower to ensure adequate foot contact with the floor.
- **Upper extremity propulsion only**: The floor-to-seat height must be sufficient to allow at least two inches of footplate clearance, ensuring you can navigate obstacles.

For the most effective propulsion, good access to the push rim is essential, and is achieved through proper rear wheel axle positioning as described above. Picture the rear wheel as a clock face: it is recommended that you place your hand at 11 o'clock to begin the push and drive through until the elbow is fully extended.

The Four Main Propulsion Techniques

i. Semicircular

This technique is the most efficient and allows the greatest shoulder recovery time between each push, reducing the risk of repetitive strain injury. It is best used when propelling long distances at steady speeds.

- Hands start at 11 o'clock and push forward to 2 o'clock.
- Drop the arms below the push rim and arc back up to the starting position.
- Begin the next push only when slowing down, veering, or needing to avoid an obstacle or turn.

ii. Single Looping Over Propulsion (SLOP)

Best suited for short distances. Note that repeated shoulder elevation in this technique carries a risk of overuse injury.

- Hands start at 11 o'clock and push forward to 2 o'clock.
- Raise the shoulders above the rim and bring

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the hands back to the start position to re-grasp the rim for the next push.

iii. Arc

Best suited for small spaces requiring significant control, such as ramps, gravel, and high-traffic areas. Note that frequent pushes with this technique carry a high risk of repetitive shoulder strain.

- Hands start at 11 o'clock and push along the rim to 2 o'clock.
- The hands never leave the push rim, providing greater control but reducing speed.

iv. Double Looping Over Propulsion (DLOP)

Best suited for long distances and fast speeds. Note that the wrist motion involved carries a risk of wrist injury.

- Hands start at 11 o'clock and push along the rim to 2 o'clock, then release.
- Lift the hands and quickly arc back to 11 o'clock and push again.
- The motion resembles a figure-8.

Because propulsion needs vary by situation, it is important to select the most appropriate technique for the task at hand. When the optimal technique is used, the shoulder is positioned favorably, push stroke frequency is reduced, and the risk of overuse and repetitive strain injury is minimized.

CONCLUSION

A manual wheelchair represents the foundation of a user's mobility, independence, and long-term physical health. The factors outlined above represent essential considerations in optimizing wheelchair use. Understanding both propulsion techniques and wheelchair configuration will benefit not only physical health but also overall quality of life.



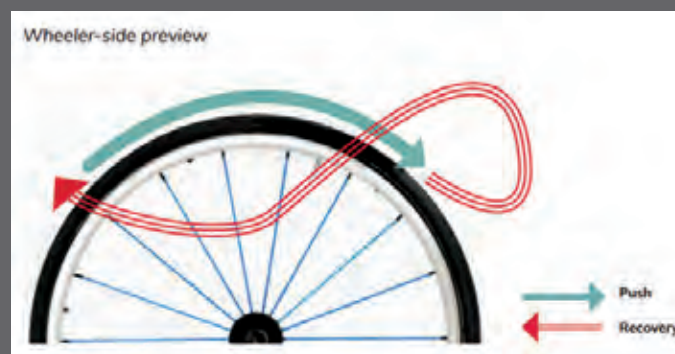
i. Semicircular



ii. Single Looping Over Propulsion (SLOP)



iii. Arc



iv. Double Looping Over Propulsion (DLOP)

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The **Access 2** card is for people of all ages and types of permanent disabilities who require the assistance of a support person at hundreds of participating entertainment, cultural, and recreational venues across Canada. Its core idea is simple: when a person with a permanent disability who needs a support person visits a participating venue, that support person gets in free or at a discounted rate, while the cardholder pays regular admission. The goal is to improve social inclusion and remove barriers to entertainment, culture and recreation.

How it works at a venue

Cardholders present their Access 2 card to venue staff when arriving. The cardholder pays their own regular admission, while the accompanying support person's entry is free or discounted, depending on the specific venue's policy.

Eligibility

- You must have a permanent disability, which means any impairment - physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, sensory or functional limitation - that restricts your ability to attend participating venues by yourself, and your disability remains with you for the rest of your life.
- The nature of your disability must require you to have the assistance of a support person when visiting participating venues.

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Cards purchased before that date remain at the previous rate (\$20 for 3 years, \$30 for 5 years). Easter Seals, which manages the program, indicates the cost increase is necessary to keep improving the program and sustaining accessibility efforts.

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Caring for a Loved One with a Spinal Cord Injury

4 Essential Tips for Caregivers

A spinal cord injury is a life-changing event that profoundly impacts not only the person injured but also their family. As a family member, you may have taken on the vital role of a caregiver, supporting your loved one through this challenging journey. The care you provide plays a key role in their recovery, helping them regain independence and rebuild their life.

Caring for someone with a spinal cord injury can feel overwhelming, but you're not alone. With the right tools, knowledge, and support, you can help your loved one thrive while finding balance in your own life.

This blog post offers some tips to help you navigate caregiving and support your loved one's recovery, from our friends at Coloplast Canada.

Here are some tips to help you care for your loved one with a spinal cord injury:

1. Educate yourself about spinal cord injury.

Understanding your loved one's injury is one of the most important steps you can take. Talk to their healthcare team about the level and extent of the injury, as well as how it affects their medical needs, daily function, and long-term outlook.

The more you learn, the better equipped you'll be to understand what they're going through and to tailor your care to their needs.

Explore Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba's services and connect with local support groups by visiting their website at www.scimanitoba.ca.

2. Take care of yourself

Caring for your loved one is important, but prioritizing your own health is just as essential (1). To provide the best care for your loved one, you need to take care of yourself first—ensuring you have the physical, mental, and emotional energy to



support your loved one without feeling overwhelmed or exhausted. Consider these self-care strategies:

- Take regular breaks and ask for help: Consider hiring personal care assistants, and don't hesitate to ask family and friends for help with caregiving (1).
- Stay active: Exercise in any way that suits you. Physical activity, whether it's a daily walk, yoga, or a fitness class, can reduce stress and boost resilience (1).
- Consider counselling: Talk to a professional who can provide emotional support and teach coping strategies. Counselling offers a safe space to process your feelings and stay balanced (3).

3. Help your loved one establish a daily routine

Establishing a daily routine is essential for fostering independence and maintaining health after a spinal cord injury. Here are some ways you can support your loved one:

- Grooming and dressing: Arrange grooming items and clothing within easy reach. Use



adaptive tools like long-handled brushes and zipper pulls to make tasks simpler. Encourage a consistent routine and offer assistance as needed.

- **Bladder management:** Your loved one may need assistance with bladder control and need to integrate intermittent catheterization into their bladder routine. Choosing an intermittent catheter that fits you and your loved one's lifestyle may help with their overall confidence and comfort. SpeediCath® compact catheters are designed to be discreet, so catheterization doesn't have to get in the way of your lives. They are also pre-lubricated and ready to use right out of the packaging, so there is no extra step of lubrication required. SpeediCath® compact catheters are available in both male and female, and are available to sample for free!
- **Bowel management:** Spinal cord injuries often affect bowel control, making a well-planned bowel management program essential (5). Key elements for a successful bowel management program include regular timing, a high-fibre diet, plenty of water, and physical activity. Encourage healthy eating, staying active, and

regular discussions with their doctor to adjust the program (7).

4. Keep on top of skin health

People with spinal cord injuries can be more prone to pressure injuries due to lack of movement and/or sensation (8). They need to be frequently checked, and your assistance is invaluable to check areas not easily visible to your loved one. Special attention should be paid to the areas over a bony prominence where pressure ulcers often form (8). Look for reddened areas that, when pressed, do not turn white, and for blisters, sores, or craters (8).

In addition, you may want to explore preventative products that are designed to reduce pressure, such as pressure-reducing pillows, foam padding, pressure-reducing mattresses, and more.

For more resources on skin health visit Cortree's resources at cortree.sciontario.org/category/skin-health or visit the wound education section of Coloplast's website at www.coloplast.ca/Wound/Wound/education. Always consult a healthcare professional with any questions or concerns related to pressure injuries.



Final thoughts: embracing the journey together

Life with a spinal cord injury can bring significant changes to both your loved one's life and yours as their caregiver. However, with your support, they can recover, regain independence, and lead a fulfilling and healthy life.

As you navigate this journey together, remember to care for yourself, offer the support you can, and seek help whenever you need it.

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ParaTracks in your inbox



Starting in fall 2026, SCI Manitoba is transitioning to a digital version of our news magazine and [we want to hear from you](#) how you want to receive ParaTracks in the future.

If you want to continue receiving ParaTracks [in print form](#), you do not need to take any action.

If you prefer to [make the transition to digital](#), you must opt in by scanning the QR code on this page with the camera on your smartphone or use the web link below and complete the online form so we can send you an email containing the link to view the digital version of ParaTracks on our website each time a new issue is available.

We understand many of our readers will continue to want to receive ParaTracks in print, and we will continue to make the print version available until further notice.

This transition to digital reflects our commitment to delivering relevant and newsworthy information to our readers and supporters in ways that are most convenient and accessible. The transition will also help reduce the rising costs for printing and mailing ParaTracks.

If you have any questions or feedback about the transition to digital ParaTracks, please contact Dan Joannis, Executive Director, by phone at 204.202.8326 or by email at dan@scimanitoba.ca.



... or type this link into the address bar of your web browser (Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Safari, etc):

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