



United Way
Winnipeg

Lasting change and better lives for everyone.

Eagle's Eye News

Aboriginal Relations Council welcomes new chair

"I always think about that phrase: to whom much is given, much is expected," remarks Christine Pierre on the subject of her own life journey and what led her to her position as the new Chairperson of United Way of Winnipeg's Aboriginal Relations Council.

Sitting down to talk with Christine, it is impossible not to be struck by the genuine passion she has for fostering relationships and for creating opportunities for others. It is evident that Christine's attitude towards giving back to her community extends beyond a sense of duty. For her, being able to make a meaningful contribution is a source of pride and great joy.

Christine, who is of Cree and Metis descent, was born and raised in Winnipeg's North End. The oldest of seven children, her childhood was spent in poverty.

As a young single mother who was "completely sheltered in a web of poverty," Christine didn't believe that a post-secondary education was within her reach. Fortunately, Christine was encouraged to apply to the University of Manitoba through an access program. She was accepted, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies and a minor in Chemistry.

Within a year of graduation she discovered a posting for a newly created job at the University of Manitoba. It was a position that she felt had have been tailor-made for her: Aboriginal Student Recruitment Officer.

Christine applied and was hired. That was 11 years ago.

"I have the best job in the world," she says, her face lighting up. "Ultimately, my job is to create and deepen awareness about the opportunities that exist at the University of Manitoba for Aboriginal people. Coming to the University of Manitoba was the defining thing in my life – I know firsthand what it is like to be empowered through education, so I really feel like I am in the right place."

Christine has been officially involved with United Way of Winnipeg for two years, first as a member of the Aboriginal Relations Council, and then joining the board of trustees. In 2009, Christine co-chaired the Aboriginal Relations Council with Anna Fontaine.



Aboriginal Relations Council welcomes Christine Pierre as new chair.

Christine is particularly excited about the Council's work on the second edition of *Eagle's Eye View: An Environmental Scan of the Aboriginal Community in Winnipeg*.

"It's an absolute goldmine," says Christine, "We want to use it as our tool for helping to create a greater awareness of Aboriginal culture within United Way. That's going to be our first

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SPONSORED EXECUTIVE

A profile in leadership

IT TRULY TAKES A SPECIAL PERSON to be a sponsored executive. In the fourteen weeks that they spend together with United Way of Winnipeg, sponsored executives receive a crash course in resource development, but that's really only the beginning of the job description. A sponsored executive must be able to co-ordinate workplace campaign events, facilitate canvasser training programs, fill in as a motivational speaker at the drop of a hat, and possess a taxi driver's ability to navigate Winnipeg's streets in order to meet an exacting schedule full of meetings and special events that have them travelling to locations in every corner of the city.

None of this really seems to faze sponsored executive Anthony Niigani, who takes all of the demanding work expected of sponsored executives in his stride.

"I was one of the first sponsored executives to start work back in July," says Anthony. "Fortunately, the training itself really provides us with the base knowledge that we need to

ULTIMATELY, I REALLY LIKE CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE, AND THAT'S WHAT I DO AS A SPONSORED EXECUTIVE.

build the skills we'll need when it comes to connecting with the employee campaign chairs, meeting with the committees, and just connecting with the communities that we are in. Ultimately, I really like connecting with people, and that's what I do as a sponsored executive."

Anthony, whose employment is sponsored by the Province of Manitoba's office of Advanced Education & Literacy and Education Citizenship & Youth, brings to his position a wealth of experience gained from an extensive background in fund development and youth leadership in the Aboriginal non-profit community.

He grew up in various communities in Manitoba, but calls the Pimicikamak Cree Nation in Cross Lake home. Something of a Renaissance man, Anthony has attended and received certification from several universities around North America in such diverse areas of study as Gang Management Studies, Music, Teaching, and a Co-working Disorders Initiative.



In addition to working as an educational assistant for the Winnipeg School Division, as a special education teacher at Manitoba Public Insurance and holding various positions

in the non-profit sector, Anthony has been a long-standing and highly visible volunteer for various agencies and organizations that serve Winnipeg's Aboriginal community since moving to the city in 1997.

Anthony served as the Manitoba Youth Leader for the Assembly of First Nations. He and his wife Diane sit on the Aboriginal Advisory Committee for Families And Children Together (FACT), and the two of them were founding members of an Aboriginal health servicing organization that advocates and provides programming to First Nations people with disabilities.

Disability advocacy is a cause that is especially dear to Anthony's heart as his wife lives with arthritis. In addition to the work he does for the Aboriginal community, Anthony has also completed the Arthritis Self-Management Facilitator for the Arthritis Society of Manitoba, a United Way agency partner.

In his role as a sponsored executive Anthony has had the opportunity to do some reflective thinking about what he hopes can be gained through continued engagement between United Way and the new generation of leaders in the Aboriginal Community.

"When it comes to the next generation of people in our community, it is important to help them understand that whatever investment they provide, it should be towards something they believe in. Whatever their passion is should be used in support of their community as well. It is their leadership giving that will bring other leaders forward. By being a leader first, others will follow."

IN ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY, the Medicine Wheel is a sacred symbol of balance and harmony. At the heart of the Medicine Wheel is the concept of the circle of life – the belief that all things are intricately connected and of equal importance to the well-being of the whole.

At the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, a United Way agency partner, the wisdom and principles of the Medicine Wheel act as an animating spirit. The work they do is guided by a

Healing our men

knowledge of the fundamental interconnectedness of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and well-being.

“All of our programs are holistic in nature,” says Executive Director, Darlene Hall. “We look at a person as a whole person. If you work within the Medicine Wheel, it’s all about balance. If you’re having problems in one area, whether it be physical, emotional, or spiritual, then everything is affected.”

Located in the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg on Higgins Avenue, the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre

provides Winnipeg’s urban Aboriginal community with access to a range of primary health services and programs that enhance their lifestyles and living conditions through a blend of traditional and contemporary practices.

Since 2008, United Way of Winnipeg has supported the Mino-Pimatziwin (MP Healthy Living) Program at the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre. The program currently provides a spectrum of services to more than 90 First Nations, Metis and Inuit Aboriginal men who live in Winnipeg. It consists of a combination of one-to-one counselling, group work and

cultural-based therapeutic

services and primarily serves men who are either survivors of mental, physical and sexual abuse in the residential school systems or dealing with the inter-generational effects of those abuses.

“It’s well documented how Aboriginal people have lost that sense of who they are. No matter what culture you come from, if you don’t know who you are, you don’t know where to go,” says Hall. “One of the biggest

issues in the lives of Aboriginal people is that the control of your life was taken away from you – with residential schools and the child welfare scoop of the fifties and sixties. So many people were totally cut off from their roots, and so then you have a big hole in your psyche, because everybody needs to belong to something. We’re just giving our participants the tools to find out what that something is for them.”

In order to facilitate that ability to regain control, the Mino-Pimatziwin Program only accepts clients who come in on a voluntary basis, and provides its participants with an individualized and choice-based framework so that they can be in charge of their own healing processes.

The successes of the program are tangible.

“Although most of the men that come in are on their own, as they work through their issues, they then start working to connect with their families and their communities. You have to have healthy individuals to have healthy families, healthy families to have healthy communities, and healthy communities to have healthy nations, and that’s all part of the Medicine Wheel.”



Farewell to a friend

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of April MacCaulay on November 13, 2010, after a courageous battle with cancer. The Aboriginal Relations Council and United Way of Winnipeg have lost a cherished friend and loyal supporter. April was the beloved wife of our Aboriginal Relations Manager, Bruce Miller.

April was a remarkable woman. A loving and devoted mother of six, her children and her family were the guiding light and driving force of her life. April was very proud of her First Nations heritage, and she had recently graduated from Urban Circle with her health care aide certification after entering the program as a mature student. April will be remembered by her many friends, neighbours and loved ones as a woman of strength and character. She had a fine mind, a quick wit, and a warm and open heart.

April was always very proud of Bruce’s work with the Aboriginal community and at United Way. April and Bruce decided that anyone wishing to do so, may make a donation in memory of her to United Way of Winnipeg, an act we are deeply honoured by.

To the friends and family of April MacCaulay, United Way’s board and staff extend our deepest sympathies.

A new building and a new United Way ambassador

On November 18, 2010, Winnipeggers celebrated the official opening of United Way's new home at 580 Main Street in the heart of the city. Government officials joined United Way volunteers, agency partners, loyal friends, supporters and staff for a day-long event beginning with a media conference in the building's main floor atrium.

The main floor reflects United Way's commitment to creating opportunities for better lives for everyone in our city. It is a space dedicated to community – where people can connect, collaborate, inspire and innovate.

Visitors are greeted by our Community Host, a new position that was created in conjunction with United Way's relocation and the organization's re-affirmation of its commitment to community accessibility. Community Host, Sherry McKay serves as United Way's ambassador on the main floor – greeting and directing guests and providing visitor information. Sherry, who is Ojibway, is a recent graduate of the University of Winnipeg's Indigenous Police Preparation Program and was her



class's valedictorian. Sherry decided to apply specifically for the job because it would allow her to work in the core area in a frontline position.

In addition to her work at the front desk, Sherry also supports the main floor Learning and Innovation Centres. The

Learning Centre is a space where non-profit organizations can build knowledge and capacity in areas like human resource, financial management, leadership development, evaluation, governance, planning, and marketing. The space blends advanced

technological capacities with traditional considerations like being a suitable venue to host smudge ceremonies.

The Innovation Centre, which is home to hot-desk start-up space, allows non-profits and social entrepreneurs to work towards self-sufficiency. At modest cost, United Way is providing the resources and support these organizations need in order to fulfill their missions and bring to life their ideas for real and lasting change in our community.

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step, and then we want to promote it to the larger community. We feel that we have a very solid and exciting plan to build on something that we are very happy with. We really want to capitalize on the wealth of information within Eagle's Eye View."

If you would like a copy of the most recent edition of *Eagle's Eye View*, please contact Bruce Miller, Manager, Aboriginal Relations at United Way of Winnipeg. Email bmiller@UnitedWay-Winnipeg.mb.ca or call 477-5360.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact:

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