

ENHANCING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING ACROSS THE PROVINCE

ENDOW MANITOBA'S SECOND CONFERENCE
BUILDS CONNECTIONS AND CAPACITY



On a weekend in late April, community foundations from across Manitoba travelled to Winnipeg to learn and grow together at Endow Manitoba's second conference. The provincial conference was attended by 200 volunteers, staff, and board members, representing 45 Manitoba community foundations. It also welcomed special guests from across the country.

Courtney Feldman, Manager of Capacity Building with The Winnipeg Foundation and the conference lead, says, "The passion and enthusiasm of Manitoba community foundation volunteers and staff make this conference special. Each attendee's willingness to engage and share creates a safe and enjoyable place to connect and learn." This sentiment was reflected by the goodwill and camaraderie characterizing the three-day event, which ran from April 19 to 21, and saw groups of dedicated individuals gather to share a passion for community-building.



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Kris Archie, Chief Executive Director of The Circle on Philanthropy (The Circle), gave a keynote address about how community foundation leaders and Indigenous leaders are coming together to build relationships through a shared vision of enhancing community well-being. Sky Bridges, President and CEO of The Winnipeg Foundation, hosted a plenary discussion featuring Archie, Kim Lavallee (Executive Director, Community Foundation of Portage & District), and Chief Maureen Brown (Board Member, The Pas-Tri Community Foundation) about fostering relationships with Indigenous communities.



Endow Manitoba, a program of The Winnipeg Foundation, works to advance the sustainability, growth, and impact of Manitoba's community foundation network. The biennial conference provides an opportunity for staff and volunteers to meet in person and build relationships with other community foundations from regions and communities across Manitoba. Feldman explains that the event "aims to boost the sense of belonging and fortify the Manitoba community foundation network."



ENHANCING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING ACROSS THE PROVINCE (CONTINUED)

Manitoba community foundations are predominately operated by volunteer boards, with a small network of staff emerging throughout the province. The number of community foundations across Manitoba has increased exponentially throughout the past decade, creating numerous opportunities for peer-to-peer connection and learning. The conference provides comprehensive and practical sessions to address the needs of community foundations at various stages of growth and development.

The conference's learning approach pairs presenters from different community foundations and allows for plenty of small group discussions, ensuring each session is relevant and tailored to attendees' needs. Michelle Piwniuk, a member of The Endow Manitoba Provincial Advisory Board, a group of 12 volunteers who help guide the program, says the conference provides valuable networking opportunities and highlights the power of peer support. She adds that she wishes the conference "was available when I first joined the network; attending it should almost be a requirement for new board members, and there's also great value in it for more seasoned board members."

That value is represented by the sharing and growth that took place throughout 28 sessions offered by more than 70 speakers. The sessions covered topics from governance, fund development, and grant making to community engagement and finance, and included immersive learning sessions focused on creative, technical, and administrative skills. In addition to the 28 learning sessions, there were four plenary sessions, including an inspiring conversation on fostering relationships with Indigenous communities.

In addition to learning and sharing skills, there was plenty of time for fun and networking at the conference, with Debbie Majeau, a staff member at Brokenhead River Community Foundation, saying, "having been in the room for ten minutes, I just knew 'these are my people.'"

Feldman, reflecting on the success of the conference, says that the "remarkable turnout, vibrant discussions, and shared ideas have undeniably reinforced connections, showcasing how mutual support fuels the ongoing success and development of community foundations throughout Manitoba."



Above: Conference attendees enjoyed plenty of time for networking and hands-on learning. Right: The Winnipeg Foundation's Capacity Building and Programs team.