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Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.

"those who lead"

Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc. December 2023 Newsletter

**Here are some stories and updates
from Ka Ni Kanichihk before the holidays!**

A Holiday Message from Us to You

As we approach the Winter Solstice season, I wanted to take a moment to extend my warmest wishes to each and every one of you. May this festive season bring joy, peace, and moments of shared happiness.

In the spirit of community and togetherness, let us celebrate the bonds that connect us and the strength that comes from supporting one another. May the holidays be a time of reflection, gratitude, and renewed hope for the coming year.

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season filled with love, laughter, and the warmth of cherished traditions.



Best Regards,

Dodie Jordaan, Executive Director

Capital Expansion Update: December 2023

The Ka Ni Kanichihk Capital Expansion will expand Ka Ni Kanichihk's existing building from 8,700 sq. ft. to a two-storey, 23,000 sq. ft. building located at 455 McDermot Avenue. The project will attach the new build to the current building, with some demolition required for the front of the existing building.

This new, purpose-built facility is dedicated to healing, education, and training through the addition of a new cultural space, a demonstration kitchen, a wellness space, two new classrooms, a clinical space, and an expanded daycare. The community has been asking for a dedicated space and additional resources for years, to ensure the health, wellness, and inclusion of urban Indigenous people in our city.

We are happy to report that construction began in the summer of 2023.



We held a ground blessing ceremony in September 2022 to prepare for the expansion before the ground froze, and tobacco was put down by Laverne Gervais on the first ground breaking in June 2023 (as pictured above).

We are very excited to see all the activity on-site and look forward to the building structure, framing, and envelope going up in early 2024. The expansion project remains a 14-month build, with building occupancy scheduled for March 2025.



We are so grateful for all the community support and donations, making this 20-year dream a reality for our community. Once completed, the beautiful two-storey, 23,000 sq. ft. building and outdoor gathering space will be the heart of the neighbourhood. With the additional space and the programs, it makes it possible for thousands more in our community to access tools and supports to transform their lives.

We look forward to welcoming you into the new Ka Ni Kanichihk Campus.

Keesaywatsiwin: Grace & Kindness

Honouring Community Leaders for Indigenous HIV/AIDS Awareness Week



Pictured: top left, Gayle Pruden; top right, Peetanacoot Nenakawekapo; bottom left, Jackie Flett; bottom right, Dr. John Kim.

Did you know the rate of people living with HIV in Manitoba increased 52 per cent from 2018 to 2021?

According to the most recent Manitoba HIV Program Report, “Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba are disproportionately affected... due to the ongoing impacts of colonization, structural racism, and intergenerational trauma.”

This year, we recognized Indigenous AIDS Awareness Week (IAWW) from December 1 (World AIDS Day) to December 7.

On December 6, Ka Ni Kanichihk hosted an event at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights for Indigenous HIV/AIDS Awareness Week. The event, Keesaywatsiwin: Grace and Kindness, honoured community members and their efforts in raising awareness of the prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS in our Indigenous community.

Ka Ni Kanichihk would like to thank all of the honourees for their hard work in uniting our communities in the effort of prevention, education, and awareness surrounding HIV and AIDS.

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The honourees are as follows: Gayle Pruden (2Spirit Knowledge Holder and Mino Pimatisiwin Sexual Wellness Lodge Kookum); Jackie Flett (Mino Pimatisiwin Sexual Wellness Lodge Auntie/Community Host, Mother and Activist); Dr. John Kim (Public Health Agency of Canada National HIV Lab); and Peetanacoot Nenakawekapo (2Spirit Knowledge Keeper).

A blanketing ceremony was held in recognition of each honouree, symbolizing their significant contributions in service of our community (pictured above).

We would also like to thank those who spoke at the event: Dr. Albert McLeod (2Spirit Consultants of Manitoba), Dodie Jordaan (Ka Ni Kanichihk Executive Director), and Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Manitoba Minister of Health, Seniors, and Long-term Care).

“Rates of HIV have increased in Manitoba, not gone down,” said Dr. Albert McLeod. “So, whatever we’re doing isn’t working. Last year it increased. This year it increased as well. These are just the people who have the wherewithal to be tested.”

“This is a preventable infection and has been from the very beginning,” said McLeod.

“As a community, we all walk with each other and look out for each other,” said Gayle Pruden. “[But] we start walking alone. That's what makes it so difficult, especially at these times with the availability of all these drugs that are killing our youths and our people, our knowledge holders.”

“That's what we're all here for, is to help one another, to embrace one another, to walk with each other. Through the Creator we can all do that.”

To learn more about Indigenous HIV/AIDS week, and related education or resources, please visit www.caan.ca.

For the Manitoba HIV Program Report, visit www.mbhiv.ca.

A Community Update from Velma's House



We recently sent out a letter to the community on behalf of Velma's House, reflecting some changes to Velma's House services.

Our changes include:

- **Increased Safety:** We have contracted Bear Paw Security to be on-site 24/7. This group is more rooted in conflict resolution in comparison to other security firms. They understand how to de-escalate a situation.
- **Added Staffing:** We have hired a fourth staff member for each shift at Velma's House to address the needs of the participants, and to support positive interactions within the community.
- **Revised Participant Intake Process:** Our new intake process includes a thorough review of safety expectations for every visit and for every guest. That means we greet everyone and assess their situation at the front door to determine if we're the right place for them.
- **Updated Internal Processes:** We have worked to clarify a better understanding for our staff and guests about what services and supports we provide. We are aware we cannot provide services for all community members. Our role is to provide support and a safe space for women with immediate safety needs. We can also help women who need greater support by finding them organizations and services better equipped for their specific needs.

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Although we know the importance of Naloxone access in combatting toxic substance poisonings, this is currently outside of our capacity at Velma's House.

To be clear:

- In situations where Naloxone is needed for a person off our property, we will call paramedics.
- When people come to us with open wounds, we will send them to the hospital for care.
- We cannot be a first stop for women released from jail. These women deserve to be in a transition home as they reintegrate into the community. We are not designed to support these kinds of situations.

Velma's House always has, and will continue to offer referrals and to help navigate health, employment and housing systems. We are proudly living up to our founders' vision, and our hard-working and heartfelt staff will continue to do so for many years to come.

To make the really big changes Winnipeg needs in this unprecedented toxic substance crisis, everyone needs to work together. We are inviting you to work with us to address these larger issues in whatever form you are able.

We are here to stay and to continue building a community which cares for all of our relatives.

Sincerely,

Velma's House

MMIWG2S License Plates Available Now



On Friday, December 8, Ka Ni Kanichihk and MPI announced the launch of MMIWG2S license plates, a project with the goal of raising awareness and supporting families of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

The MMIWG2S license plates are available now at all Autopac brokers and MPI Service Centres. There are two designs, a red dress and a red hand print, chosen by families of MMIWG2S.

A portion of the funds from purchases of these specialty plates will be used to support the children impacted by this national crisis through an education fund toward their pursuit of post-secondary education. The funds will be dispersed through Ka Ni Kanichihk's Medicine Bear Counselling and Elder Support Services program.

We are proud to be partnered in this project with Manitoba Public Insurance, and to further our own support and the public's awareness of MMIWG2S families and their loved ones.

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Thank you to everyone who attended the announcement, including press, government officials, and the families and loved ones.

While there is always more work to be done, we hope this is one more step - hand in hand - toward a future free of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and two- spirit people, and a reassurance that lost loved ones and their families will never be forgotten.

To learn more about the MMIWG2S license plates, visit
<https://www.mpi.mb.ca/Pages/non-member-specialty-plates.aspx>

To learn more about Ka Ni Kanichihk, visit www.kanikanichihk.ca.

Ka Ni Kanichihk Community Solstice Dinner
Thursday, December 21, 2023 (4PM to 6PM)



We would like to cordially invite everyone to Ka Ni Kanichihk's Community Solstice Dinner!

On Thursday, December 21 from 4PM to 6PM join us at 34 Higgins Avenue for a community feast. This is a free event open to everyone.

There will be treat bags for children, and a chance for everyone to get together and experience the warmth of our community before the holidays.

We're proud to host this event, and we hope to see you there!

Ka Ni Kanichihk staff and participants would like to extend our warmest regards. We are grateful to be able to connect with individuals like you who embody the spirit of festive giving.

Your support can empower women, youth, and families in our community. You can provide access to cultural resources, mentors, education, training, and wellness programs, fostering meaningful changes in people's lives.

This holiday season, consider gifting health, strength, independence, and hope to those in need.

Your Contribution Can Make a Difference:

Cultural Resources: Preserve and share Indigenous culture, creating a secure space for cultural practices and traditions.

Mentorship Programs: Support youth initiatives, guiding them toward pride, community, and responsibility.

Education and Training: Empower individuals with skills for financial independence through educational and job-skills training programs.

Wellness Supports: Contribute to programs of healing, success, and leadership among youth, women, and families recovering from trauma.

We invite you to help make a lasting impact on those seeking support, guidance, and a sense of belonging from Ka Ni Kanichihk. Consider making a gift today, helping us create a snowball effect of positive change in our community!

Thank you for your consideration. We wish you joy, warmth, and a deep sense of fulfillment this holiday season.

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DONATE TODAY!

Winter Break Office Hours

Our staff will be out of office on winter break from Friday, December 22 to Tuesday, January 9.

If you're a community member and require immediate assistance, please email admin@kanikanichihk.ca or call 204-953-5820.

We wish everyone a wonderful holiday season.

See you in the new year!