



Social Development Centre
— WATERLOO REGION —

WHAT MOVES YOU To...

Build

Resist

Celebrate

Support

Act

Listen

Social Development Centre Waterloo Region
2022 ANNUAL REPORT





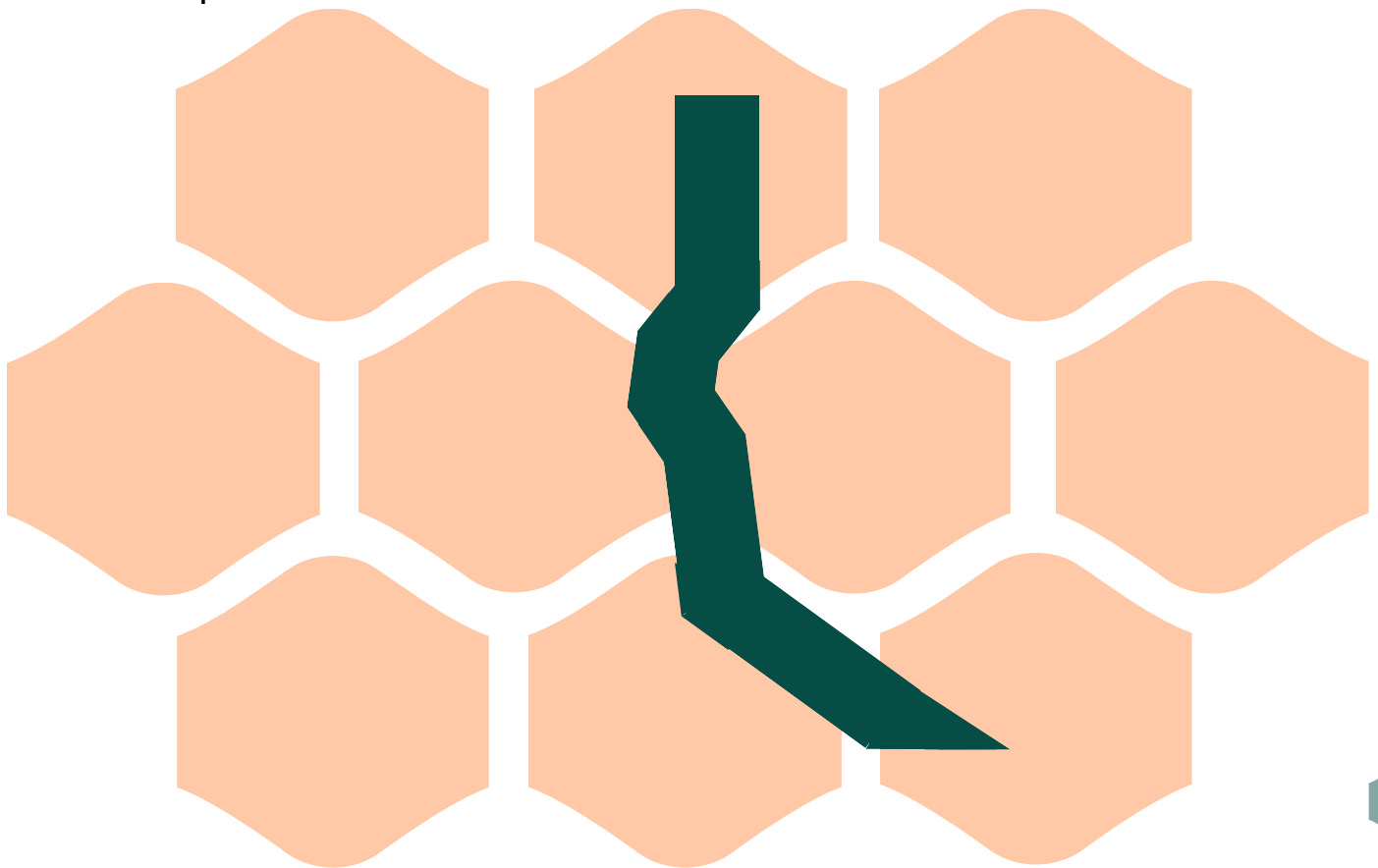
Honour

“Land Is Not Meant To Be Private Property”

We are working on the traditional shared lands of the Mississaugas, Haudenosaunee, Chonnonton, and Anishinaabe peoples. We honor their original claim to these lands and the legacy of the first displaced peoples.

The territory we are on is Block 2 of the Haldimand Tract, which is promised territory that was never given to the Six Nations of the Grand River for serving the British during the American Revolution. In April 2021, nine months into the land reclamation by the people at 1492 Land Back Lane, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council announced a moratorium on development within the entire Haldimand Tract.

It is our responsibility to call out the dispossession of the land and demand the collaboration of the province and the Municipality of Waterloo to work out agreements based on the Haudenosaunee Development Protocol.





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Letter from the Board

Dear members of the Waterloo Region communities,

As the Board President of the Social Development Centre, I am excited to share some of the great work our organization has been doing to promote social justice and equity in our communities. Our programs and initiatives are made possible by the courage, collaboration, and dedication of our staff and lived experience associates who have been working tirelessly to create a better and more inclusive society for all.

In response to the increasing pressure of the housing crisis, our key programs, such as the Lived Expertise Working Group with the City of Kitchener, peer-led Eviction Prevention in Kitchener–Waterloo–Cambridge, and research on ongoing displacement in urban and rural communities in Ontario, continue to provide support structures for lived experience leadership.

Similarly, our involvement with various initiatives, including cCHALLENGE, the Disabilities and Human Rights Group, Awareness of Low Income Voices, and the Community Wellbeing Survey, reflects our maturing approach and dedication to addressing current socio-economic challenges from the ground up.

Homelessness is on everybody's mind as we enter 2023, and our work will address the policies that perpetuate the criminalization of poverty in support of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.

Letter from the Board

We are committed to supporting grassroots groups and organizations by providing them with space and resources through the Civic Hub Waterloo Region. We will continue to advocate to ensure that lived expertise is incorporated into places of decision-making and further develop our idea of a lived expertise consultancy.

Additionally, the Board of Directors is striving to ensure that the Social Development Centre is resilient, healthy, and adaptable, while also creating fair and equitable employment and professional development opportunities for staff and associates. We are joining national calls to all levels of government to ensure dedicated funding for social benefit organizations.

We are truly excited and humbled about the possibilities ahead and invite you to join us in our efforts to create a more just, equitable, and inclusive community.

Sincerely,
Brad Ullner
President of the Board

Act

Streams of Activity

We continue to streamline and focus our programming to maintain healthy workload levels and best target our work.

**Shared
Platform**

Civic Hub

**Lived Expertise
Working Group**

**Lived
Expertise
Consultancy**

**Festival of
Neighbourhoods**

**Grassroots
Infrastructure**

**Lived
Expertise**

**Peer
Internships**



Social Development Centre
WATERLOO REGION

Tax Clinic

**Income
Supports**

**Housing &
Homelessness**

**Eviction
Prevention**

**Community
Information**

**Gas & Electricity
Support
Programs**

**Displacement
Research**

**Housing
Advocacy**

Build

Grassroots Infrastructure

Waterloo Region is rich with amazing grassroots groups and diverse neighbourhood and community advocacy initiatives. We remain committed to building bridges, expanding capacity, and celebrating community power!

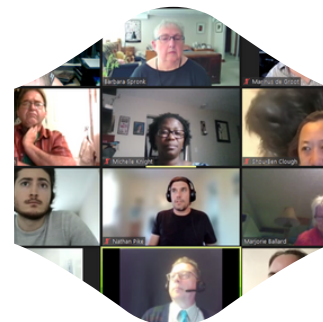
**Shared
Platform**

Civic Hub

**Festival of
Neighbourhoods**



Also called the Civic Hug, this program was born at the juncture of the dreams and hard work of a number of established and emerging grassroots and social justice groups. The program continues to develop its networking, capacity building, financial empowerment, and training programs, all stemming from the actual work our partner groups do. In order to build the autonomy of collective and individual groups, our Shared Platform program promotes access to grants and funding to be able to grow and broaden the reach of their advocacy.



Filling the Gap

In June 2022, the Civic Hub received a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant to start a project in partnership with Wilfrid Laurier University titled, “Filling the gap: The role of social engagement hubs in a world changed by COVID-19.” An Advisory Group was created which includes representatives of partner groups as well as groups who are not currently affiliated with the collective.

New members and over two-thirds of the partner groups who have been with us since before the COVID-19 pandemic were interviewed by the end of December 2022. Group representatives were excited and eager to share how they fared during the pandemic and their future plans. They also provided a slew of helpful recommendations for the Civic Hub's future. The final report is expected to be completed by late June 2023.

Shared Platform

Since 2020, we have been offering shared platform tools to our Civic Hub partner groups. These tools include donation management, budgeting support in grant writing, fiscal sponsorships, and financial reporting for grants we collaborate on.

Some initiatives we have supported through the platform include A Better Tent City, Land Back Camp, Black Lives Matter Waterloo Region, the Unsheltered Campaign, and Peace for All Canada.

The experience of the Shared Platform gives evidence that the sponsored groups and the charitable sponsor (the Social Development Centre) benefit from the platform because:

- Groups are able to increase their capacity in multiple areas and gain access to the benefits of the Civic Hub Program; and
- The Social Development Centre is building deeper relationships across communities whose wisdom is essential to build our collective path forward.



Civic Hub Partner Updates

The Civic Hub and the Shared Platform supported over 30 grassroots groups and initiatives in 2022. Learn more about all our Civic Hub Partners at <https://civichubwr.org/partners/>



A Better Tent City

A Better Tent City was incorporated in 2021, and the Social Development Centre continues to support its transition as a charitable partner. We continue to involve them in our lived expertise work, and the residents of A Better Tent City helped collect surveys for the Community Wellbeing WR Survey and took part in a Pop-Up Living Room to explore challenges and reconnect with their neighbours through their stories.

Unsheltered Campaign

In 2022, the Unsheltered Campaign wrote a series of letters to municipal councils. These letters brought forward requests to introduce a moratorium on encampment evictions and sanction spaces for unsheltered residents to help over 700 unsheltered people find community, safety, and support to live and survive. In 2022, the Unsheltered Campaign also sent pledges to the Regional Council to withdraw their lawsuit against 100 Victoria Street encampment residents, and its members testified at court hearings.

Celebrate

Festival of Neighbourhoods

www.festivalofneighbourhoods.ca

In 2022, the Festival of Neighbourhoods celebrated its 29th year! The festival has been a dynamic influence in Kitchener neighbourhoods since 1994 and is always finding new ways to dynamize our communities. We had our first in-person celebration since the pandemic and celebrated all the Pros at Propinquity!



What is **Propinquity**? Propinquity is about getting to know your neighbours, building community, and becoming friends. The formal definition is the state of being close to someone or something, proximity, or kinship.

Our goal last year was to support our network of neighbours to become "Pros at Propinquity." We created several videos that feature some of our neighbourhoods, their accomplishments, and their activities. Check our YouTube Channel and subscribe, ring the bell, and help us gain traction. You can watch all of the videos on our playlist, "Pros At Propinquity Celebration 2022."

This year, we will celebrate our 30th anniversary, and we are hoping to build on the gains of last year and return to a new normal after pandemic fatigue, isolation, and creative adaptation. Several neighbourhoods started to take advantage of our activity trunks, and we also culled extraneous supplies to focus this service and streamline it. We welcomed some new neighbourhoods and started to renew our relationships with long-standing members.

Living Rooms

The COVID Safe Spaces Pop-Up Living Rooms Initiative started in 2021 in collaboration with the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative. The goal was to start conversations around creating COVID-aware communities while in a COVID-safe space. In 2022, the project evolved and lived on through the Civic Hub and the Festival of Neighbourhoods. It has moved beyond just COVID safety —it now includes physical, cultural, spiritual, emotional, and community safety.

The easily transportable pop-up Living Room space has a couch, a lamp, a coffee table, and more so community members can sit and have meaningful conversations with each other about safe public spaces. As the pandemic amplified isolation and conflict, it became extremely important to share stories of challenges and experiences in safe and trusted spaces. Over 30 of the Civic Hub's partner groups have access to the comfortable Living Room space to discuss and explore challenges, share knowledge, reconnect through stories, as well as engage and have opportunities to share resources.

The Living Room was set up as part of the City of Kitchener's Pop-Up Park in October 2022. Conversations were held regarding Proximity and Homelessness in Parks with some help from the Festival of Neighbourhoods and Lived Expertise Working Group.



Morning	
10:00 am	Open
10:30 am	Spaces, Places, & Faces: Festival of Neighbourhoods
Noon	
12:00 pm	Lunch & Learn
Afternoon	
1:00 pm	Homelessness, Parks & Community
2:30 pm	Wind Down

Listen

Lived Expertise

Building on our history of amplifying and supporting people living on the margins, our Lived Expertise programs bring people with lived experience and advocacy experience to the table with policy makers.

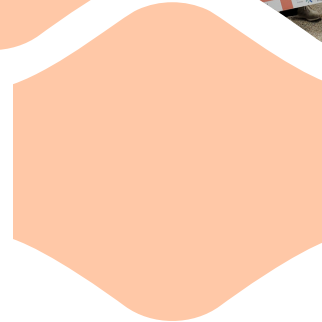
**Lived Expertise
Working Group**



**Peer
Internships**



**Lived
Expertise
Consultancy**



Lived Expertise Working Group

In May 2022, the Social Development Centre partnered with the City of Kitchener to establish a Lived Expertise Working Group (LEWG) as a two-year pilot project. The group consists of 12 members from diverse backgrounds who have lived experience and a shared passion for the human right to housing. The group supports the City's Housing For All Strategy and is co-creating a more ethical model of community engagement that centres lived expertise.

In 2022, the Working Group chose to prioritize supporting encampments and facilitating closer collaboration among the different levels of government regarding housing.



The Lived Expertise Working Group has accomplished the following:

- Reviewed the Region of Waterloo's Interim Housing Solutions with Leilani Farha from The Shift;
- Led a panel at LISPOP Housing Forum on lived expertise;
- Hosted an orientation on lived expertise for newly elected regional councillors and senior staff;
- Started developing an evaluation process for the City of Kitchener's bylaws based on the human rights approach to encampments;
- Partnered with researchers at Wilfred Laurier University to explore experiences of displacement using photo voice research; and
- Supported the development of an action participatory research project with the University of Waterloo and the Region of Waterloo to address unsheltered experiences and hidden homelessness.

Peer Internships

The Peer Internships initiative has been a staple of the Social Development Centre's work since 2012. It includes ongoing recognition of the knowledge creation work done by lived experience community connectors who provide counsel and advice to government bodies at all levels seeking input and feedback on their policies and strategies. Our team is committed to decent compensation for the lived experts we support in these processes, and we are moving towards the decent work initiative. With greater recognition of local institutions, we wish to enhance this approach and gradually create a social enterprise by establishing a lived expertise consultancy.

Wellbeing WR Survey 2023

With the onset of the 2022 Wellbeing Survey process, the Social Development Centre joined other partner organizations to mobilize their staff and community connectors to take part in the planning and implementation of engagement strategies for the hardest-to-reach populations (low-income, homeless, and precariously housed).

The Social Development Centre's community connectors collected over 280 responses from underserved and marginalized populations. Our community connectors compiled the feedback they received during the collection of survey responses and again, as in 2018, concluded that the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, which is designed for the average resident, is not capturing the lives, needs, and experiences of marginalized communities. All the partner agencies who intend to use the survey results need to do additional engagement to allow underrepresented groups to define wellbeing on their own terms and ensure that the approaches they use do not incorporate a middle-class and Western worldview, whiteness, and heterosexual biases.

Disabilities and Human Rights Group

In December 2022, the Disabilities and Human Rights (DHR) Group organized and hosted the “I Am Not Invisible” panel event at the Kitchener Public Library. It was organized in recognition of the United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and the overarching goal of the event was to shine a light on the experiences of young people who are living with invisible disabilities.



Awareness of Low Income Voices

In June 2022, the Awareness of Low Income Voices (ALIV[e]) Group partnered with the Civic Hub and other community groups for an anti-poverty engaged theatre production rooted in lived expertise called Living Below the Line. The production was a stereotype-busting work centered on struggle, resilience, perseverance, and hope and was co-created by local community members living below the poverty line.

Read more about the climate initiative cChallenge, food security work, and other peer-led projects at www.waterlooregion.org/lived-expertise.

Housing & Homelessness

Despite research done by the National Housing Office and studies across Ontario and in Waterloo Region on the impacts of unregulated, financialized housing markets that lead to displacement, illegal and informal evictions, an increase in homelessness, gentrification, and rapid changes in the social fabric of central and suburban neighbourhoods, we still struggle to influence the decisions of the provincial government and local municipal councils that are not respectful of the human right to housing.

**Eviction
Prevention**

**Displacement
Research**

**Housing
Advocacy**



Eviction Prevention

Eviction Prevention Waterloo Region began in 2021 in direct response to findings from the Mapping Displacement in Kitchener–Waterloo Report. The report identified tenant experiences and landlord practices ranging from discrimination to renovictions as forcible moving and the un-homing of tenants in Waterloo Region. Eviction Prevention brings many community partners together, such as Waterloo Region Community Legal Services, Kitchener–Waterloo–Cambridge Bylaw, and Lutherwood, and directly addresses the risk of homelessness for the most underserved groups. We were the recipient of the 2022 Spirit Award from the United Way Waterloo Region Communities.

Eviction Prevention helps tenants remain housed by learning about their tenant rights and responsibilities, advocating for their rights, documenting their experiences, and effectively addressing landlord–tenant conflict. Eviction Prevention Peer Workers provide prolonged and intense support to tenants in crisis and form trusting, safe relationships with tenants through relational, trauma-informed support. This peer worker and tenant relationship allows tenants to share, feel heard, and participate in their own housing advocacy.

Cambridge

Eviction Prevention began creating strong partner connections with other housing support services and entered into third-party agreements to support marginalized communities. Our team has developed a great working relationship with Langs and Lutherwood to work together to refer tenants who need eviction prevention support and might also experience health factors that may affect their housing security. We also continued to provide assistance to tenants who received several types of legal and illegal eviction notices. We hope to enter into third-party agreements with more community partners to strengthen community support for tenants.

Protect

Eviction Prevention

Kitchener

In 2022, Eviction Prevention started offering our support to tenants facing mass renovations and built strong relationships with the tenants' City Councillors. We educated tenants about their rights, connected them with legal services, sent letters to their landlords about their intent to return to their units following the renovations, and helped request group hearings at the Landlord and Tenant Board. We also raised public awareness of the region's renovation epidemic as we were interviewed by CBC News, the Mike Farwell Show, and the Waterloo Chronicle (forthcoming). Additionally, we continued to support tenants facing various types of evictions and landlord harassment and neglect. Eviction Prevention hopes to build more relationships with City Councillors who can provide important political advocacy to strengthen tenant protections and prevent evictions.



Waterloo

In 2022, Eviction Prevention organized a community event to address barriers to support in an underserved Waterloo neighbourhood by bringing together various organizations that offer tenant assistance. The event helped tenants interact with support services in an accessible manner to learn more about the resources that are available to them. Eviction Prevention has also continued supporting tenants across Waterloo to prevent bad faith “landlord’s own use” evictions and complex eviction cases stemming from various eviction notices. Our goal is to continue advertising our services to increase the number of Waterloo residents who reach out to us for assistance.

Many Faces of Urban and Rural Displacement in Ontario

The Social Planning Network of Ontario launched studies in four Ontario communities in collaboration with the Centre for Equality Rights and Accommodation, the University of Waterloo, Halton Region, Kingston and District, Oxford County, and the Region of York. These studies are a follow-up to a series of displacement studies that the Social Development Centre and the University of Waterloo's School of Planning collaborated on. The goal is to bring tenants together who live in precarious housing in both rural and urban settings and collect stories to demonstrate trends and gaps in data and knowledge about displacement and evictions.



Study: Displacement in Kitchener's Inner Suburbs

In collaboration with the University of Waterloo's Faculty of Environment, the Social Development Centre released a report in September 2022 based on a study of displacement in Kitchener's inner suburbs. The report built an understanding of the lived experiences of gentrification and displacement within inner suburban communities. It focused on the experiences of low-income, racialized, LGBTQ+, newcomer, women, and senior tenants, their day-to-day struggles, and the knowledge that they have about changes in their buildings and wider communities.

Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act

In 2022, the Ontario government passed Bill 23, also known as the More Homes Built Faster Act. Many municipalities and organizations across Ontario, including the Social Development Centre, identified a range of concerns regarding measures within the Bill that prevent the creation of affordable housing. These concerns include cutting funding to municipal affordable housing programs, reducing the number of new affordable housing developments provided through inclusionary zoning, undermining programs that protect existing affordable housing and tenants' rights, and shifting taxes from developers to ordinary households and municipal revenues.

Ontario's Housing Affordability Task Force Response

In February 2022, Ontario's Housing Affordability Task Force released a report with 55 recommendations to change the province's approach to developments. The Social Development Centre reviewed this report and identified two major concerns within it: the omission of affordable housing, and the significant cuts to democratic processes. The Social Development Centre is concerned that a report on housing affordability did not include any recommendations to increase affordable housing or protect current affordable housing. We encourage the government to reject 11 of the 55 recommendations as they threaten the public engagement process.

Proposal to Tax Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)

We assisted MP Mike Morrice with his proposal to remove tax exemptions for REITs. This would mean REITs would be taxed at the standard corporate tax rate of 38% potentially generating \$285 million in government revenues between 2023-2027.

Income Supports

We remain committed to providing support to low-income residents. Our services help people save money on bills and connect them to the best supports available within the community.

Tax Clinics

Gas & Electricity Program

Community Information

Tax Clinics

In 2022, the Social Development Centre continued to offer free virtual and in-person tax preparation for low-income individuals through the CRA Community Volunteer Income Tax Program.

Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP)

We continue to be a local agent that assists low-income families with applications to help cover the cost of electricity. We offer free application preparation and processing for OESP and gained two volunteers in 2022 to help us process the applications for our clients.

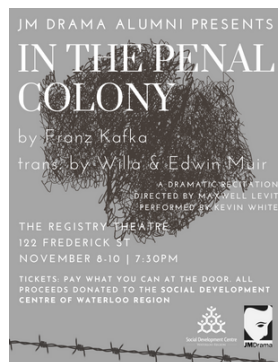
Community Information

The Community Information database provided the best available records about social and human services in Waterloo Region to the Healthline portal and responded to inquiries regarding housing and income supports. In September 2022, after 37 years of existence, our Community Information program ended.

Fundraising Partnerships

Ride For Refuge 2022

On October 1, 2022, the Social Development Centre hosted our first Ride For Refuge fundraising event. It was an in-person event where participants could either cycle 10 km or walk 2.5 km to fundraise for local charities that help people who are seeking refuge from danger, hardship, and abuse. We had 38 participants and 11 different teams who helped us raise over 90% of our fundraising goal.



In the Penal Colony

Artists from JM Drama, through the leadership of actor Kevin White, held a fundraising recitation of Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" in November 2022. The play grappled with themes of institutional violence and complicity in the legacy of colonialism which resonated deeply with our work navigating systems of housing and poverty. We are very grateful to JM Drama for the fundraiser and to the Registry Theatre for lending us the venue.

Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Orchestra

We were delighted to have the Orchestra dedicate their 2022–2023 concert series to promoting our work. The Orchestra has been highlighting the Social Development Centre's community impact and encouraging concertgoers to become donors!

Join Us

Staff and Board Members

Staff

Aleksandra Petrovic, Executive Director, joined 2012

Todd Turnbull, Data & Information Systems Lead, 1994–2022

Lesley Crompton, Low-Income Program Coordinator, 2019–2022

Char Lee, Operations and Community Engagement, 2022

Heather Majaury, COVID-Safe Living Room and Festival of Neighbourhoods, since 2020

Michelle Knight, Eviction Prevention Cambridge, since 2021

Jenaya Nixon, Eviction Prevention Kitchener–Waterloo, since 2022

Hollee George, Eviction Prevention Kitchener–Waterloo, 2021–2023

David Alton, Lived Expertise Working Group Facilitator, since 2022

Lia Forma, Civic Hub Research Coordinator, since 2022

Celeste McCarthy, Communications Lead, since 2022

Jennifer Cornish, Bookkeeper, since 2022



Board

Brad Ullner, Co-Chair

Barbara Spronk, Co-Chair

Nathan Pike, Treasurer

Ambika Opal, Secretary

Bob Jonkman, Director

Ayiko Solomon, Director

Myron Steinman, Director

Debra Brown, Secretary

Laura Hamilton, Director

Leah Young, Director

Loralie Coles-Broderick, Director

Fund

Funding Partners



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