

Client Spotlight: The Winnipeg Foundation - Making a Difference in Our Community for Over 90 Years

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The Winnipeg Foundation (the “Foundation”) is the first community foundation in Canada, established in 1921. It is an endowment-based organization, preserving capital to leave a legacy for the long run. This is unique compared with other foundation models, as some focus on more flow-through funding to organizations.

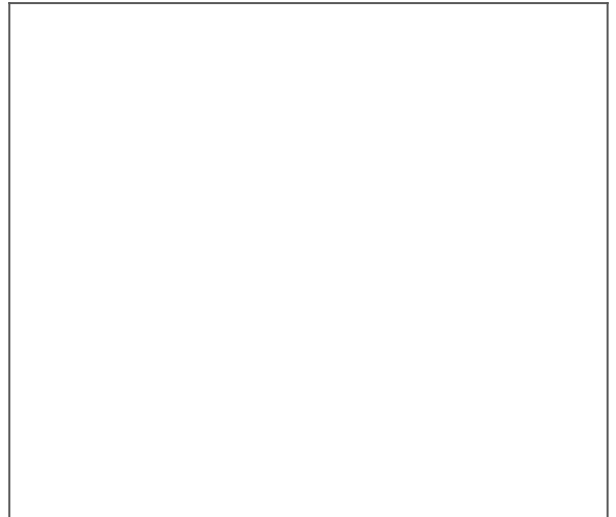
The Foundation has a rich history spanning more than ninety years. It was originally formed with a \$100,000 gift made by a local entrepreneur and banker, William Forbes Alloway. That original gift generated \$6,000 in grants the first year.

The Foundation has remained fundamentally true to its roots as an endowment fund builder. In 1924, the second gift was received, when an anonymous donation of \$15 was presented to the Foundation, now known as the “Widow’s Mite”. This marked the next chapter in the Foundation’s development, making it truly a community foundation via the premise that it is not the size of the gift that matters but the giving.

Foundation growth was slow in the early years, especially through the Depression. In 1930, land was purchased in Headingley, Manitoba where Camp Manitou is located today. In 1942, a school for Social Work at the University of Manitoba was established through Foundation support. Another significant milestone came many years later, in 1988, with the Lightcap gift of \$8 million. In 2001 an unprecedented gift of \$100 million was made by the Moffatt Family; the largest gift in Canadian history to a community foundation.

The Foundation has always been shaped by what is happening in The City of Winnipeg and how it is able to respond, always building on its creditability and trust. The Foundation supported more than 860 charitable organizations in 2014; granting \$22.9 million. The Foundation’s mandate is Manitoba and primarily activities that serve the citizens of Winnipeg.

In 1946, the first scholarship was created at the Foundation. Today, it administers 325 scholarships. In recent years, The Youth in Philanthropy (YiP) initiative was formed, and today 350 high school students participate on 26 Youth Advisory Committees. They are allocated



\$5,000 each and do their research to advise on how to best grant the money into the charitable sector.

As the Foundation grows, it offers a broad range of programs to the community, while remaining at its core is the business of promoting philanthropy in Winnipeg.

Richard Frost, CEO of the Foundation says “When people think of The Winnipeg Foundation we want them to think of giving back to the community”. The Foundation has grown significantly in recent years. In the late 1990s, grants were in the \$4.5 million range. In 2014, grants totalled \$22.9 million. Frost adds “Our story is a story of growth based on legacies”.

The history of the Foundation and its core values are not that different from most other community foundations - all have similar values and missions - to have a vibrant City for its citizens. Each community faces different issues, challenges and circumstances from Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg, to Toronto, Montreal, or any other Canadian city. Today, there are 180 community foundations across the country.

The Foundation, is accessible to everyone. A large part of its history is those who have chosen to work with the Foundation; people from all walks of life have built the Foundation to what it is today, through their gifts.

Frost says “We are managing the Foundation well in the current economic climate. We have a strong Board of 17 and strong Committees that guide our decision-making”.

The Foundation has a proud past, although it is focused on looking to the future and the changes in the community that will impact growing areas of need. One change in the local landscape is demographics. There is growing Aboriginal and immigrant populations along with aging, established residents. These trends are having an impact on the city. In the next six years, as the Foundation approaches its 100th anniversary, its focus will be more on community issues such as education and literacy, and feeding kids. The Nourishing Potential Fund, an after-school program supporting child and youth nutrition is one of the Foundation’s top priorities.

As previously mentioned, the Foundation is not just for the wealthy (e.g. The Widow’s Mite). An example of accessibility for everyone is the new You Can Do It Awards program. Through the initiative, students in Grades 5 through 12 are eligible to receive an award of \$1,000 a year, for up to eight years, as an incentive to assist with University. The students only receive the funds if they actually attend University. With matching funds and the structure of the program, with a modest donation of \$295, any individual can create a \$1,000 award for an inner-city student. Last June, 218 awards were given to students at six inner-city schools.

Frost says “The citizens of Winnipeg see the Foundation take action on high priority areas, not by lobbying or publicity”. For example, \$3 million has been invested in its Green Spaces Strategy, in the downtown area, including the Variety Children’s Park at the Forks, the Cube

Stage at Old Market Square, the redevelopment of Central Park, and the ongoing development of the **Upper Fort Garry** site.

When asked how the Foundation defines leadership, Richard Frost says “We empower leadership by the grants we make and we demonstrate leadership by the initiatives that we take”.

The 2011 Annual Report talks about fresh thinking. An example of an innovative partnership is the Foundation’s work with Assiniboine Credit Union (and others) to address the banking gaps caused by major banks pulling out of the North End of the city. Assiniboine Credit Union wanted to open a branch in the North End but did not have the required deposits to start a branch. A five year GIC plan laddered \$5 million worth of investments to the Assiniboine Credit Union and a \$2 million chequing account. The new branch opened in January 2012, near the North End YMCA.

When Frost is asked how he would describe the Foundation in a few short words, he says “We are about building a strong City”.

TDS congratulates the Foundation on its success and the significant contributions it has made to our community. TDS is honoured to call The Winnipeg Foundation a client of the firm and of our **Charities and Not-For-Profit** Practice Group.

This article was initially written by TDS Law in 2011.

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