

GRATITUDE

The L'Arche Winnipeg Newsletter February 2026 Issue 98



50 years & BEYOND



Russell at our 21st Annual Walk with L'Arche



Larry & Tova Vickar, Leonard and friends at the 2023 WWL

Join us for our biggest fundraiser of the year and come champion inclusion!



Mira Ramlal

Communications & Fund Development Coordinator

Our Walk with L'Arche first began in 2005 with the simple but powerful goal of raising awareness for our community and the need for inclusion.

On May 15th 2005, we planned to gather with blue balloons in hand and walk the roads of Transcona, passing by our four homes as a symbol of who we are and what we stand for.

To our delight, over 100 people showed up and joined us inspired by our shared vision of creating a more inclusive world.

22 years later, it has been truly remarkable to witness how our

network of friends and supporters continues to show up time and time again, spreading the word, fundraising, and celebrating our community.

Each one of you has played a vital role in helping the event grow in size and money raised. Last year alone, more than 350 people joined us and together raised over \$52,000 to support our core members in every aspect of their lives, from essential home repairs and accessible transportation to community events and meaningful social programming. Such



A sea of blue pictured at the 1st walk event in 2005

supporters include Larry Vickar, our naming sponsor since 2012 who has supported the Walk since its very beginning, and has helped our community in momentous ways throughout the years.

When reflecting on the importance of the Walk, Larry shared that this event is a **powerful moment for all of us, where we can come together, support a worthy cause and find within ourselves a deeper understanding and need for inclusion in our society.** As our community continues to grow, both in size and in age, so do our needs.

I invite you to hold Larry's message close to heart and join us once again this year in walking with L'Arche. Your presence and support help us raise money for essential needs in our community while celebrating inclusion, the very mission that has guided us from the beginning.

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Follow L'Arche Winnipeg and L'Arche Tova Café on Facebook and Instagram for more!

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Our 22nd Annual Vicker Automotive Group Walk with L'Arche event will be held on **Sunday May 3rd at Park City West Community Centre** (115 Sanford Fleming Road).

Registration opens at 2pm, and we will gather at the start line to set off at 3pm, with the choice to walk and roll a path of 1km or 5km; down the Transcona Trail.

Following the walk, celebrate with a BBQ meal, live music, entertainment, prizes to win, and a performance put together by our core members!

Registration is welcome to anyone and **costs \$15 for adults and \$10 for kids**, which includes the food and festivities following the event!

Early registrations are encouraged and can be done by mail, online, in person at the L'Arche Winnipeg office (118

Regent Ave E), or via e-mail at office@larchewinnipeg.org. Extra printable registration forms can be found online at www.larchewinnipeg.org!

When you sign up before April 3, 2026 and raise a minimum of \$100 in pledges, you'll receive a free Walk with L'Arche T-shirt as our thank you!

We can't wait to see you there and look forward to walking for inclusion together!

Guiding voices in our community



By Mira Ramlal

*Communications & Fund
Development
Coordinator*

If you've met Michael, you know of his willingness to start a conversation with anyone, and natural gift for forming connections. Throughout his 39 years in L'Arche Winnipeg, he has served on numerous councils, always sharing his thoughts freely and equipped with a witty comment, that has the ability to warm a room instantly.

So naturally, when he was asked to join the animation team at L'Arche Canada's National Leaders Conference he was "All In".

The Annual September National conference, is an opportunity where leaders from L'Arche communities across Canada, gather for a week of learning, planning, and most importantly, shared connection. The animation team, an engaged group of core



Michael and Lorra from L'Arche Calgary

members from L'Arche communities throughout the nation, were invited to attend, and had the important task of creating moments of engagement and connection for our community leaders. Throughout the four-day conference, the team wore many hats. From guiding and welcoming guests; to leading morning reflections and facilitating activities, they were there at every moment and were catalyst for many moments of joy.

Among the many activities he led, Michael shared that one of his favourites was serving as the judge in a lively "Cat vs. Dogs" mock debate. A proud cat owner,

he couldn't help but let his allegiance show, gently nudging the debate in favor of cats. His debate brought the room to life, sparking laughter, enthusiasm, and full-on crowd participation. Dominic Opaka, Community Leader of L'Arche Winnipeg, reflects on just how much the animation team's presence brought life to the conference:

"When they shared their voices the whole space filled with energy, naturally drawing us into deeper, more meaningful connections."

Amid their busy days, there were still pockets of free time to explore the city and simply enjoy being together. Michael shared how much he enjoyed these evening activities, such as the night of a lively talent show, where the room came alive with dancing, singing and comedy performances by community leaders and core members. *Continue on next page —*

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Unexpected moments of joy also took him by surprise. Dominique, a L'Arche assistant who accompanied Michael on the trip, recalls a moments of spontaneity when members of L'Arche were exploring the city and someone began playing music:

“Before long, we were all dancing, moving, and laughing together!”



Michael seated in the pilots chair

it was such a simple moment of connection, yet one that felt deeply true to the L'Arche spirit, and significant of enjoying the small moments in life as we often do in our community. As the trip came to

an end, Michael had the chance to have a memorable experience that quickly became a highlight of his trip. After striking up a conversation with the pilot and sharing his love of airplanes, he

was invited into the cockpit! It was a unique and meaningful moment, made possible simply through the genuine connection he created. The presence and joy that Michael and the other members of the animation team brought to the conference remind us of the power of authentic relationships, and of the everyday moments of delight so often sparked by core members in our L'Arche communities.

These spontaneous, warm, and deeply human experiences capture what it means to live L'Arche and the many gifts it offers. **Want to see how our core members share their gifts in our community? Follow @larchewinnipeg on Instagram and Facebook.**

A journey to finding belonging in l'Arche

By Agnes Oceu

I first heard about L'Arche in December 2023 when I visited my sister in Canada for the first time. She had a friend who worked as an assistant in a L'Arche Winnipeg home and she believed it would be a meaningful experience for me as well.

Rather than spending all my time at home, I felt this would be a great opportunity to give back. And so, my journey with L'Arche began; not as a career goal, but as a quiet curiosity and a few hours a week as a volunteer.

What inspired me to get involved with L'Arche was the sense of purpose and belonging that comes with being part of a

community. As a volunteer, I spent mornings and afternoons helping out at the Welcome Centre, assisting with group activities, which I especially enjoyed as it allowed me to engage with the core members.

At other times, I offered an extra set of hands around the home, helping with laundry, groceries, or simply being present. I quickly realized that the greatest impact wasn't in the tasks I completed but rather, in the social connections and friendships I built. I felt like I was part of a family. Before I began volunteering, I carried some nervousness about how I might be perceived or whether I would know the "right" way to interact. Those feelings quickly faded as I learned that what mattered most was showing up as a person, not



Agnes and Rolande at community circle

just as a helper. The individuals I met were welcoming, funny, independent, determined, and complex; just like anyone else. This exposure shifted my perspective, helping me see disability not as a limitation, but as one part of a person's rich identity and uniqueness. As my volunteer hours increased, so did my desire for a deeper commitment. when

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the opportunity arose to become a house assistant, I knew I had to take it. It was a significant leap from occasional visits to day-to-day involvement, but worthwhile as I wanted to be fully part of the L'Arche family. As an assistant I have the opportunity to provide person-centered support, recognizing that each individual has unique goals, needs, and dreams. This means supporting independence rather than replacing it. At times, that involves stepping back and allowing space for struggle, learning and growth,

while also celebrating small victories. Whether it's helping someone complete a puzzle, learn a new skill, or advocate for their own choices, each moment matters. Volunteering at L'Arche gave me a deep sense of belonging and showed me the strength of community support. From the very beginning, I felt welcomed and valued. I met people with shared interests, diverse cultural backgrounds, and formed connections and skills that have added to my life in momentous ways.



*Agnes, Sterling and Rolande celebration
Rolande's 67th birthday*

Interested in starting your volunteer journey with L'Arche? Reach out to Maureen Manning volunteer@larchewinnipeg.org to explore meaningful volunteer opportunities.

A snapshot from the past

As told by Shirley Nolan

In 1974, the L'Arche Winnipeg community in its second year of existence, attended a pilgrimage in Canterbury, England, where communities from France, England, the USA and Canada were gathering to spend Easter together.

Traditionally, these pilgrimages would end with a fiesta: a celebratory evening spent performing skits, encouraging some friendly competition between communities. The community voted to have the best performance would lead the procession to Canterbury Cathedral on Easter Sunday, carrying a banner ornate with emblems, representing each group at the pilgrimage.

Daryl Torsha, a friend of L'Arche Winnipeg on the trip, had recently composed a song, *Happy Birthday Winnipeg, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the city*. Determined to win, we had the grand

idea of accompanying the song by dressing up as candles, sporting orange garbage bags, Styrofoam hats, and, of course In the spirit of the times, topped with sparklers. The big moment came and it was our turn to perform. The lights dimmed, the guitar started playing, and as a finishing touch, the sparklers were lit.

Naturally, the Styrofoam caught on fire and chaos broke out as peoples' heads were surrounded by an orange hue! Eventually, the flames were put out and thankfully, no one was hurt. Presumably, everyone found this thoroughly entertaining, because we ended up winning first place! On Easter Sunday, we carried the banner high and proud as we led the procession to the cathedral, spending the afternoon in celebration, which even included some dancing in the church! This story filled with joy, spontaneity, and just the right amount of chaos, still encapsulates the spirit of our community over 50 years later. **Have a community story to share? Write to us at: fundingandcommunications@larchewinnipeg.org**



L'Arche Winnipeg proudly carrying the banner to the cathedral

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