

# GOOD WORK NEWS

The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S. Kitchener, ON N2G 1V6

Issue 125

June 2016

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

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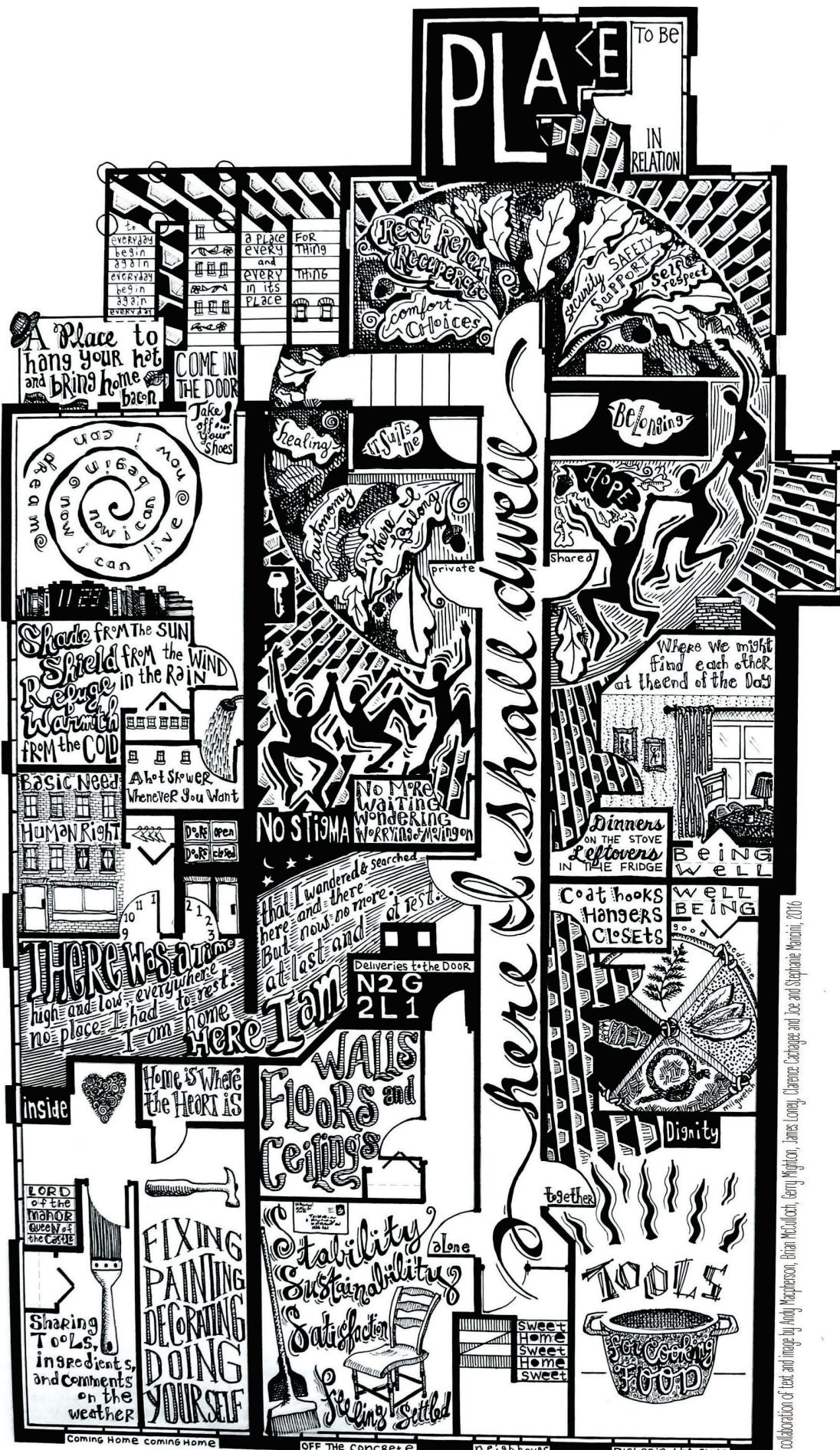
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## In Appreciation for Housing Campaign Support

We are pleased to announce that The Working Centre's campaign to raise \$1 Million dollars towards creating 18 affordable units for the persistently homeless has reached its financial goal and all the units have been built and people have moved in. Andy Macpherson's graphic celebrates the successful completion of this project. On page 3, we offer a special thank you to all who contributed to make this possible.



## Summer Institute July 14 -18, 2016

This coming July The Working Centre is hosting our first ever Summer Institute exploring what it takes for organizations to root themselves in community while remaining responsive, reflective, and guided by deeply held values.

What is the key to balancing grassroots community building against top-down systems thinking? How is it possible to use creative ways to foster community while buffering bureaucracy?

If you are interested in these questions, then The Summer Institute might be just for you. Join us July 14 - 18, 2016 in downtown Kitchener. Come engage in dialogue and ideas exchange, share your experiences, listen to the experiences of others, and learn from and contribute to the philosophy and practices of The Working Centre. See page 8 for more details.



## Honouring Ari Ariaratnam and Jassy Narayan

by Dave Thomas

It was a colourful, joyous atmosphere at the 29th Annual Mayors' Dinner, as 850 people joined together to celebrate community builders Ari Ariaratnam and Jassy Narayan for their many decades of support of refugees and immigrant women.

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Thirty Second Year

Issue 125

June 2016

## Good Work News

Good Work News was first produced in September 1984. It is published four times a year by The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen as a forum of opinions and ideas on work and unemployment. Four issues of Good Work News constitutes our annual report. There is a circulation of 12,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

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**Contributors:** Kyle Murphy, Dave Thomas, Heather Montgomery, Isaiah Ritzman, Andy Macpherson, Rebecca Mancini, Doug MacLellan, Jane Snyder, Paulina Rodriguez, David Shumaker, Tom Friesen, Richard Albrecht, Angela Louther, Adam Kramer.

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## Youth Entrepreneurship Project

by Jane Snyder

Youth Entrepreneurship Project (YEP) participants become the first to use the new space at the Working Centre's 256 King St.

Entrepreneurship can be exhilarating, and it can be terrifying. You can meet lots of great people, but it can also be very lonely. - Sylvia Hook, 2015 YEP participant

Sylvia's quote reveals a number of common issues that face entrepreneurs. Starting your own business – or working in the non-traditional “gig economy” – can be difficult. After having hosted the Waterloo Region Assets Plus (WRAP) small business training program in partnership with the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) for the past 15 years, and having worked with young entrepreneurs through the Youth Entrepreneurship Project (YEP) in 2015 (with a new 2016 cohort accepting applications now!), the Working Centre has been thinking about ways to support entrepreneurs in their business pathways.

In a post-program survey in 2015, YEP participants reported that their greatest needs were: access to an enterprise facilitator who can

help them think through business challenges, finding information about business training programs, and access to a low-cost workspace.

As the new building at 256 King St. began to be transformed, an idea blossomed: could this building host a place-based co-working space for people wanting to start their own business or explore income streams to create work for themselves?

In addition to hosting projects such as Community Access Bikeshare, the Commons Studio and a digital media lab, 256 King St. will feature a coffee bar, a rentable event space and co-working spaces where people will be able to work independently, but work alongside other people starting their own ventures.

The first group to join the 256 King St. will be the 2016 Youth Entrepreneurship Project (YEP) participants. To be part of the YEP project youth under age 30 need to have a solid business idea, able to commit 20 hours per week to develop their business and not be enrolled as a full-time student. YEP participants will work together to learn, share their expertise and energy, attend weekly networking sessions and other workshops and complete business plans.

### Are You Between the Ages of 19 and 29 and Out of School?



### Youth Entrepreneurship Project

- Develop your business idea
- Work part-time while starting your business
- Connect with Mentors and Micro-Loan Opportunities
- Build Entrepreneurial Skills

To see if this program is for you, contact:  
T. 519-743-1151 x139  
email: [yep@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:yep@theworkingcentre.org)  
website: [www.theworkingcentre.org/yep](http://www.theworkingcentre.org/yep)



Ready. Set. Work.



Take a CAB from one of our Cab Stations

1. KPL on Queen St.
2. The Tannery
3. Kitchener City Hall
4. Laurier Campus
5. YNCU (King/William)
6. CIBC & the Queen Street Commons Café
7. Kitchener Market
8. GRT Charles St. Terminal
9. Uptown Waterloo Parkade



For more information about Community Access Bikeshare, contact us at [bikeshare@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:bikeshare@theworkingcentre.org) or by phone at 519-743-1151 ext. 172

## Please Join Us at the 27th Annual Golf Tournament

In support of  
The Working  
Centre & St.  
John's Kitchen



Wednesday, August 17th, 2016

at Rockway Golf Course      \$120 per Golfer  
(\$40 tax receipt)

\$15 for Golf Bonus Pack  
(for prizes, gifts, &

more!)

To register:

Call Kara at 519-743-1151 x119 or  
visit [theworkingcentre.org/golf](http://theworkingcentre.org/golf)

Sponsor



# Thank you to all 555 generous donors who helped us raise 1.2 million dollars for the Capital Campaign to support housing for the persistently homeless

*It is has been less than 2 years since we imagined how we could add affordable housing units in downtown Kitchener by renovating apartments for those persistently without a home. How could we do this with relationship-based housing, providing supports when things get complicated? 18 people are now living in these apartments.*

*We have been honoured and blessed by the generous community support that makes these apartments possible - the amazing larger donations that made leaps towards our goal, and the smaller donations that built to the final amount. We have made many new friends and reinforced long-term friendships. The complexity of homelessness needs all of this and many more conversations. Attached is a list of all the donors to our campaign, if we missed you, our apologies in advance. We are grateful for each and every donation!*

## Thank you to the following donors who contributed over \$7,500

Anonymous (2), Keith & Sheila Ainsworth, Bank of Montreal, Jim & Lorna Blair Charitable Foundation, The Boardwalk, Christie Digital, Congregation of the Resurrection, Cote Lock Service, The Cowan Foundation, Ron & Sue Doyle, Jim & Marianne Erb, FunnelCake Marketing, FaithLife Financial, Gore Mutual Insurance, Pat George/G&A Masonary, David and Maddy Gibson, Jim & Sue Hallman, Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, Randall Howard & Judy McMullen, Sorbara Law, Wayne & Tammy Kemick, Hartman & Brenda Krug, Margaret Motz, John & Heather Motz, Paul & Catherine Motz, Ken and Marilyn Murray, Brian & Mary Ann Ruby, Trillium Mutual Insurance, UNIFOR Social Justice Fund, Van-Del Contracting Ltd., Rob & Michele Way, Zion United Church

## Thank You to our Campaign Co-Chairs Jim and Sue Hallman and Jim and Marianne Erb.

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## The 29<sup>th</sup> Mayors' Dinner Honouring Ari Ariaratnam and Jassy Narayan

continued from page 1

Ari is well known as the founder of Focus for Ethnic Women, and Jassy as the first executive director of Better Beginnings, Better Futures in Guelph. The video tribute that was filmed and edited by the Common Studio, demonstrated the wide breadth of accomplishments and contributions to the community that both women have offered since immigrating to Canada 50 years ago.

Barbara Rahn, who ran the area's first regional child care centre, hired Jassy and encouraged her to pursue education. Jassy "was a natural community worker and I thought it was such a waste if she didn't get trained," said Barbara. "She had a natural ability to organize people, be empathetic and sympathetic."

Dilan Singaraja, Ari's nephew, described how Ari and her husband sponsored more than 40 family members to come to Canada to escape the civil war in Sri Lanka. He said that "Ari has always been very generous, very giving, very loving. She is just willing to help in any way she can."

Describing Ari's many strengths, Shobhana Ranjit from Focus for Ethnic Women said that "Ari's forte is her interpersonal skills, her leadership, her coordination skills. But above all in all her professionalism what she uses is what we commonly disregard, and that is common sense."

Steven Shadd, who worked with Jassy at Better Beginnings and teaches community organization at Conestoga College, said that he tells his students that "the queen of community organization is Jassy Narayan."

Ari "sees the big picture," said

Mary Jane Brooker of the YWCA. "She is able to recognize needs, and she has a vision. But that doesn't mean she misses the details. If you want to write a grant, she can do that, and you will probably get the money you asked for. I can also say that Ari shows unfailing respect for everyone she works with, everyone she encounters. She works with passion and compassion. She never loses her vision or her sense of humour along the way to making our community a better place for all of us."

Describing Jassy's role of supervising social work students at the KW Multicultural Centre, CEO Lucia Harrison said: "Jassy provides students with a lens, a way to deconstruct language, barriers, challenges. She shares with the students her own personal experiences, all with a lens towards inclusion. All the students who've been supervised by Jassy over the 10 years have been thrilled by the opportunity and impressed by her insights. I consider Jassy to be a pioneer who has built bridges, bridges between mainstream and community agencies, between mainstream communities and ethnic communities, between students and their educational institutions, and this was all on her quest towards inclusion. Jassy is an inspiration."

The event, hosted by Mayors Berry Vrbanovic, Dave Jaworsky and, for the first time, Doug Craig of Cambridge, raised over \$72,000 to support The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen.

### Thank You to the Community Groups

- Bell
- Erb & Good Family Funeral Home
- Hallman Construction
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- City of Kitchener
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- Margaret Motz
- PwC
- RBJ Schlegel
- Reception House
- Strassburger Windows and Doors
- Sustainable Societies Consulting Group



The 29<sup>th</sup> Mayors' Dinner marked the first year that Cambridge Mayor Doug Craig, joined Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbanovic and Waterloo Mayor Dave Jaworsky as a host of the Annual Dinner. In the photo above all three Mayor's congratulate Ari and Jassy.



# A New Approach to Inclusion

## Partnership with Extend-a-Family and WALES

by Stephanie Mancini

The Working Centre community has been strengthened and diversified in our collaborative work with people with developmental disabilities. In our Community Tools projects, people with developmental disabilities form a critical part of our work crews – serving meals at the Queen Street Commons Café, sorting furniture at Worth a Second Look, cooking food in Maurita's Kitchen, growing sprouts and vegetables at the Hacienda garden and in the GROW greenhouse.

So, when Extend A Family/WALES invited us to think about making our Job Search Resource Centre more responsive/inclusive of people with developmental disabilities, we were excited to explore the possibilities together.

Since April of 2015 this partnership has been guided by this statement - we propose to partner with a mainstream community-based employment organization (The Working Centre) to enhance the opportunities for people with disabilities to access employment services (resume writing, job search and development, interview skills) in a non-segregated setting along with other members of our community.

We have learned that good employment counselling and increased awareness make this work possible:

- Starting with relationship first – how do we come to know and understand the hopes and dreams of each person.
- Using goal-based language to define simple yet concrete and specific goals that help the person to build achievable steps towards a larger goal.
- Learning to work within a circle of support model – including family members, support workers, neighbours, facilitators who have all built a creative model of support that forms creative bridges for people with developmental disabilities.
- Understanding the complexities of developmental services and supports, understanding how this model of creative responses can also create a protected environment where a person becomes unable to express their skills, needs, hopes because the people around them all understand and know them so fully. How to describe their skills outside of this supportive environment, while also building independent coping skills in new environments that support the person?
- Building opportunities and

awareness with local employers – are there ways that employers unknowingly exclude someone because of a disability? Can we help to build inclusive work environments? Can the person we support learn the skills of stepping outside of their experiences and become a dynamic part of a new work environment?

- We have recently worked with NetSuite to “job carve” two positions, where TWC supports the hiring and employer role, while Extend A Family supports the job-coaching that helps to increase awareness and reduce anxiety in a new and challenging work environment.
- We are delivering a Creative Pathways workshop series to support people to imagine their ideal work environment and to describe their goals and skills in ways that build more job carving possibilities with local employers. This workshop serves a wide range of people and is not limited to those with developmental disabilities.
- This work takes longer, is strongly relationship based, and requires agile and thoughtful work within a circle of care model of support. Our pilot project ends in October, but we are hoping to find ways to continue to learn more about this creative work.



## Open Space at the Queen Street Commons Café

*Open Space is a weekly gathering that promotes inclusion within the community by getting people together at a cafe for food, fun and conversation.*

In addition to weekly coffee and conversation, with the support of facilitators, attendees plan special events such as Halloween parties, and Open Mic Nights.

All are welcome regardless of ability, and you do not need to be supported by Extend-A-Family to attend.

Extend-A-Family  
WATERLOO REGION

The Working Centre



To learn more contact Matt Riehl at 519-741-0190 ext. 300 or [mriehl@eafur.on.ca](mailto:mriehl@eafur.on.ca)

## Thanks to All of the Volunteers Who Made the 2016 Income Tax Clinic Possible!

Altogether 281 volunteer hours were contributed every week by 33 volunteers working every weekday and Wednesday evenings between March and April.

Over 3000 tax returns were completed, with 5 volunteers also assisting at Chandler Mowat Community Centre. Altogether this work helped people living on a low income access over \$6.7 million dollars in tax credits.

The Money Matters Hub is open Monday to Friday helping provide year-round practical help around financial challenges.

## Partnerships are about Discovery

by Angela Lowther

Partnerships are about discovery. Whether it's with a new friend, colleague, something more intimate or a business relationship, partnerships consist of finding out what it is that each party involved brings to the table that would make it worthwhile to continue a relationship. This is what we've discovered in the relationship between The Working Centre and Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region's WALES (Working Adults Learning Empowering Skills) Group.

First, and probably most importantly, we've discovered that both our agencies are aligned in our approach to people. We both believe "People are people are people" and no matter what circumstances anyone is in or has come from we all deserve the same basic rights and freedoms that would allow all of us to participate as full citizens of our community. Those that need support to achieve access to these rights and freedoms deserve it and it is completely within our power to give that while maintaining the dignity and empowerment of those we support. This is a huge connection and the cornerstone of a powerful and positive partnership.

*Like any other partners there are different strengths that come from different parties. Our goal is to use these strengths in tandem to provide employment services to everyone in our community, and that includes people with developmental disabilities.*

We've also discovered our differences. Like any other partners there are different strengths that come from different parties. Our goal is to use these strengths in tandem to provide employment services to everyone in our community, and that includes people with developmental disabilities.

The Working Centre brings years of expertise in the support of job search and employment counselling techniques and know-how, while WALES brings its understanding of the world people who have developmental disabilities have been raised in, the infrastructure of developmental services and how to provide the support necessary to help a person living with a developmental disability through the process of attaining employment. Together we've begun to examine how these two fields of expertise can merge and what's needed on both sides to make it work. Already, over 50 people have benefitted from this partnership's offerings in many ways.

The future will be filled with challenges, again, as any kind of partnership faces, but in our case it is our belief that with a solid shared philosophy of service and the dedication to make opportunities available to all people, we will make this a lasting relationship. A relationship that will refine services and engender the out-of-the-box thinking necessary to provide better and more successful experiences for everyone that comes to us for support.

Angela Lowther is a worker at Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region in the WALES program.

# Laurier School in the Community

## Pillar Two - Access to University

by Heather Montgomery

Laurier and The Working Centre are partnering to offer an Access-to-University program. This certificate program will support non-traditional learners, (including first-generation students, New Canadians, Aboriginals, older workers and those living on limited income), to build the capacity and confidence to access university, as well as build foundations for further education and personal development. The program, made possible by a three-year grant from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, provides supported access to university credit courses for non-traditional learners in a non-threatening, community-supported setting.

The Access to University Certificate, will provide introductory university-level courses specifically designed to enhance critical learning skills while supporting non-traditional learners and social inclusion. The certificate is comprised of a preparatory phase, and five university courses offered over a two-year period. The preparatory phase and the first university course will be offered in TWC spaces in downtown Kitchener, with supported transition to Laurier's Waterloo campus in the second year.

### Lyle S. Hallman Foundation

Building upon grassroots education projects currently available through The Working Centre, this project offers non-traditional adult learners the opportunity to engage in further learning with the potential to lead to full-time university education. This Lyle S. Hallman Foundation grant for Laurier will provide student bursaries that cover the

*This project bridges gaps that leave people out of a university education, integrating the financial, educational, career, and stabilization supports necessary to achieve success.*

*Throughout the certificate program, people will be supported to establish their own academic directions and taught skills for navigating the various aspects of a university education.*

costs of tuition and textbooks, as well as bus passes to support student transportation needs. The grant also provides funding for the university to offer smaller class sizes, and funding for The Working Centre to dedicate staff time and resources to provide educational and life-stabilization supports to students throughout the program.

The preparatory program offered at The Working Centre will support participants to make informed choices to attend university, build confidence with the expectations of a university curriculum, and increase the likelihood of success. Group learning activities will bring participants together to prepare and apply for university, and also improve access to other learning opportunities.

The five university courses are offered with smaller class sizes, coaching/tutoring supports, and supports for navigating the administrative processes of the university. Students who successfully complete the Access Certificate will have 2.5 full university credits and the option to transition into other

university programs.

### Success of Pilot Project

A smaller scale version of the program was piloted this past year, with tremendous success. We offered the preparatory program during the fall term, and one university course during the winter term. The students found the program very rewarding, and many are excited to continue with their studies through this new certificate program. One student shared with us how participating in last year's preparatory phase gave them the confidence to apply for (and successfully obtain) employment in an area that before the program, they hadn't even considered.



Julie Lonneman

This project bridges gaps that leave people out of a university education, integrating the financial, educational, career, and stabilization supports necessary to achieve success. Throughout the certificate program, people will be supported to establish their own academic directions and will learn skills for navigating the various aspects of a university education. Participants will develop skills that will benefit them in multiple ways, regardless of whether they take more university or college courses.

**To learn more about the Access Program, or to register your interest in participating, please contact Heather Montgomery at [heatherm@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:heatherm@theworkingcentre.org).**

We will begin accepting applications over the Summer months, and the preparatory phase of the program will begin in September.

## Music at St. John's Kitchen

*"There are two means of refuge from the misery of life, music and cats."*

Albert Schweitzer

by Tom Friesen

Because the board of health prohibits the presence of cats at St. John's Kitchen this leaves us with only music to fall back on to elevate the soul. Recently, St. John's Kitchen was pleased to host blues guitarist, singer-songwriter Matt Andersen. On another occasion we welcomed Patt Maloney as well. Matt and Pat's gift of music were a profound refuge for our community. To look around the room and see people moving to the music or to notice a gentleman who virtually never emotes to walk in the room and break into the largest grin I have ever seen demonstrates how deeply music can be and is a refuge. As a community we share many experiences and try to celebrate life together. From memorials celebrating lives of our community members, to celebration meals at Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving, to the giving of a cake and the singing of happy birthday to one of our members or simply the random declaration of "pop day" when we have a bunch of soda on hand, we recognize celebration as vital to our common life.

Live music in particular has a way of bridging gaps and making a room full of strangers come

together. It binds us in our common humanity and this is true of the community here at St. John's as well. Many of our patrons are very musically talented and have a deep love for music. Just yesterday I was able to hear someone playing Led Zeppelin on our community guitar (graciously given to us by Bob's Guitars) and it was flawless. I have seen how music draws people together and lifts spirits here at St. John's.

Live music, however, is often inaccessible for those who experience poverty; the reality of up and purchasing a ticket to a show is simply not as possible as it is for most of us.

It is to this end that we would like to extend an invitation to the many talented musicians within the wider community to consider sharing your gifts of music at St. John's Kitchen.

If you are interested in arranging a time to share your gift of music with our wild and beautiful community please contact us at 519-745-8928 or [tomf@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:tomf@theworkingcentre.org)



Matt Anderson (in the middle) before playing at Centre in the Square this March, stopped in to St. John's Kitchen to offer his songs and support for St. John's Kitchen.



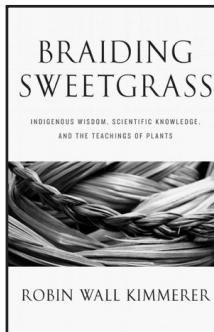
Tom Friesen with Pat Maloney

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the forces that threaten its flourishing today, she circles toward a central argument: that the awakening of a wider ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgement and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world.

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### Braiding Sweetgrass

#### Indigineous Widsom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants

Reviewed by David Shumaker

In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer suggests a simple truth: humans can engage with our environment in such a way that the land is thankful for our presence. Kimmerer, a biology professor and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, uses the ceremonial braid of sweetgrass as a metaphor, to offer “a braid of stories meant to heal our relationship with the world.” Woven from three strands: indigenous ways of knowing, scientific knowledge, and her own story of trying to bring them together in service to what matters most, Kimmerer’s book reads less like the march of a linear argument and more like a intentional walk through a series of reflective essays.

#### Maple Nation: A Citizenship Guide

In one essay, “Maple Nation: A Citizenship Guide,” Kimmerer introduces the concept of a democracy of species, focusing attention on the contribution each species makes for the good of the whole. Contemplating her census form, Kimmerer muses on the possibility of a biologically inclusive count of all in her town. In such an accounting, the maple tree would outnumber the humans a hundred to one, and their contribution exceeds that of their human neighbors.

Kimmerer realizes that the wood keeps her neighbor warm all winter even if he can’t pay his oil bill; the volunteer fire department relies on the maple syrup for their monthly pancake breakfast fundraisers; maples provide natural

*In Braiding Sweetgrass, Robin Wall Kimmerer suggests a simple truth: humans can engage with our environment in such a way that the land is thankful for our presence.*

air-conditioning in the summer and shade for holiday parades; they offer a wind-break in the winter reducing the amount of snow removal by the road crew. They provide habitat for songbirds (and tree forts) and branches for swings. They build the soil, while purifying water and the air. These services are not accounted for in the human economy, but the maples provide them for free.

#### Plants are Exemplary Citizens in a Democracy of Species

Kimmerer’s book is filled with essays like this highlighting how plants are exemplary citizens in a democracy of species. If we want to be good citizens of Maple Nation, she writes, we must cultivate awareness and gratitude for the contribution of our more-than-human neighbors. Follow back the thread of life in everything and pay it respect: “... consider the tree in the Kleenex, the algae in the toothpaste, the oaks in the floor, the grapes in the wine.... the berries in the jam, the cane in the sugar, the cedar in the pencil, the willow bark in the aspirin.”

We need rituals and ceremonies to build this culture of gratitude for the gifts of the earth. “Ceremony focuses attention so that attention becomes intention,” she writes. Kimmerer highlights one such ceremony of

her neighbors on the Onondaga Nation in upstate New York. At the local school, the week begins and ends not with the American Pledge of Allegiance but with the Thanksgiving Address, or the Words that Come Before All Else. The teacher reminds the students that every day, “beginning with where our feet first touch the earth, we send greetings and thanks to all members of the natural world.” The address includes a long litany of thanks to Mother Earth and all the members of her community, both human and more-than-human. “What would it be like,” she wonders, “to be raised on gratitude, to speak to the natural world as a member of the democracy of species, to raise a pledge of interdependence? No declarations of political loyalty are required, just a response to a repeated question: ‘Can we agree to be grateful for all that is given?’”

Gratitude, however, is not enough. The question becomes: Does our contribution to our local democracy match that of our more-than-human neighbors? Being aware of the gifts we receive from the earth, we also become aware of the responsibility we have to contribute our own gifts back to the world. A true gift exchange sets up a culture of reciprocity where each member’s gifts are freely given and freely received.

#### The Honorable Harvest

In an essay called “The Honorable Harvest,” Kimmerer describes the collected wisdom of her indigenous ancestors as they harvested the gifts of the earth, including the sweetgrass for their ceremonies. That wisdom is passed down in oral tradition with insights such as:

Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them. Introduce yourself. Be accountable as the one who comes asking for life. Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer. Take only what you need. Take only that which is given. Never take more than half. Leave some for others. Harvest in a way that minimizes harm. Share. Give thanks. Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken. Sustain the ones who sustain you.



To connect gratitude with responsibility, Kimmerer tells the story of Nanabozho, the Anishinaabe Original Man, who one day noticed that humans had abandoned their work so they could lie beneath the maples catching the originally undiluted syrup from the generous tree. Nanabozho poured buckets of river water into the branches to dilute the syrup. Now maple sap flows like a stream of water with only a trace of sweetness to teach both possibility and responsibility.

One of the reasons we have abandoned our democratic responsibilities to the more-than-human world is we have what Kimmerer describes as species loneliness: we are disconnected from the natural world and have therefore become disenchanted. One way to reconnect ourselves with our neighbors is to learn their language. In an essay entitled, “Learning the Grammar of Animacy,” she writes that changing the way we speak changes the way we think and act. For example, thirty percent of English words are verbs compared to Potawatomi’s seventy percent. In English you would speak of “the lake,” but in Potawatomi, you refer using some construction of the verb, “to be a lake.” To refer in that way gives the lake status and agency. In addition, Potawatomi divides between the animate and inanimate, and includes the more-than-human world of plants, animals, rocks and bodies of water within the animate. (The inanimate world includes those items specifically created by humans.) Kimmerer suggests we interact with the natural world in a relational way.

#### Our Disconnection

The ultimate cause of our disconnection from our neighbors lies in two sources. First, as a professional scientist, Kimmerer appreciates the power science has to improve our ability to see the natural world. But, when the tools of science are raised to the level of a worldview, the lens of scientific method can distance us from the natural world. Science-as-worldview artificially separates humans into one corner and everything else in the other. Kimmerer wraps her scientific career



## Waterloo School for Community Development

# Summer Institute @ The Working Centre

by Heather Montgomery

This coming July the Working Centre is hosting our first ever Summer Institute exploring what it takes for organizations to root themselves in community while remaining responsive, reflective, and guided by deeply held values. Most organisations today employ some type of value statement, or set of values, meant to guide their work. However, the way these values get lived out varies from organisation to organisation, often being relegated to an overlay on top of the work. At The Working Centre, values are woven into the fabric of both the culture and structures of the organization; there to guide decision making and personal interactions alike.

Over the years, many individuals and organizations have approached The Working Centre with questions about how to keep values central and resist overly bureaucratic or systemic structures. The Summer Institute is a response to those looking to find creative ways to effectively organize without alienating people. This four day retreat in July will explore the myths and realities of organizational structures, and the tools and practices that support person-centred work. We'll explore techniques that can be employed to maintain an organizational structure that is open rather than rigid, and where relationships are valued over rules.

Naturally organizations will develop structures to help provide stability to the work they are doing. Yet these structures have a tipping point - a threshold beyond which they threaten to become bulky and bureaucratic and harm not only the work being done but people in the community.

The Working Centre recognized this possibility from early on and has attentively and intentionally found ways to balance this need for structure with the danger of becoming over-structured. These ways form a whole skillset and have fed an emerging community development philosophy that helps anchor The Working Centre.

Bureaucratic structures are often seen as an effective means for creating efficiencies, but what of the barriers created by bureaucracy? A personal approach to work that resists bureaucracy is often misunderstood, either seen as chaotic and ineffective or somehow 'magical' in its effectiveness; very rarely is the discipline and practice of maintain-



ing organizational openness understood for what it is - intentional, deliberate, hard work. Remaining responsive, reflective, and guided by deeply held values in a rooted way is a daily discipline.

The Summer Institute will unpack the best practices of such grass-roots, bottom-up, community work by drawing on The Working Centre's 34 years of experience in downtown Kitchener.

The Summer Institute will be the first organized set of workshops geared to people who want to understand the philosophy and skills that enable the Working Centre to walk this fine line and achieve this delicate balance.

In a sector typically focussed on planning and outcomes, how can organisations maintain their commitment to follow the people they serve, while also maintaining accountability? What does a decentralised, yet integrated organisation look like behind the scenes and how is it all held together? What happens when reflection and conversation play a critical role in the decision making and evolution of an organisation?

We hope that the Summer Institute can be a tool for people working in other organizations to help them reflect on what it takes to uphold their commitments and their deepest values over time and to navigate challenges that arise.

If you find yourself reflecting on what it takes to balance grassroots community building and top-down systems thinking and have a desire to find creative ways to foster community and buffer bureaucracy, the Summer Institute might be just the thing for you.

Join us July 14 - 17, 2016 in downtown Kitchener. Come engage in dialogue and ideas exchange, share your experiences, listen to the experiences of others, and learn from and contribute to the philosophy and practices of The Working Centre.

**Join us for four days of workshops and discussions about giving community room to grow**

What does it take to walk the line between pioneering, grass-roots, community-building and top-down systems-organizing?

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The Working Centre Summer Institute

Thursday July 14 2016 – Sunday July 17 2016

The Working Centre, 256 King Street East, located in downtown Kitchener, Ontario

To register, please contact Heather Montgomery  
[heatherm@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:heatherm@theworkingcentre.org)

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## Braiding Sweetgrass

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within an indigenous worldview that teaches her to relate to her neighbors in a reciprocal way.

Our disconnection from the democracy of species also lies in our love affair with scarcity thinking. Kimmerer refers to the tales of Windigo, the legendary monster of the Anishinaabe people. Told around campfires in the deep of winter, the hungry time, the tales describe an outsized man ten feet tall, with "frost-white hair," "arms like tree trunks," "feet as big as snowshoes" who is always on the lurk stalking humans and making its presence known by its hideous breath breathed out through yellowed fangs. The tales were told, it seems, to scare children into safe behavior lest the boogeyman get them. Some

scholars also suggest it reinforces taboos against cannibalism during times of famine.

To Kimmerer the Windigo mythology also points to a scarcity mentality deep in the human psyche and remind us to be aware (beware) of the hungry, insatiable, greedy parts of ourselves mirrored in our collective complicity in an economics based on scarcity and the resulting unchecked appetites. Kimmerer's response to the Windigo of scarcity is abundance: 1) being grateful for the abundance of earth's gifts while 2) taking responsibility for the gifts of respect we offer back in return.

David Schumaker is leading The Cultivation Project at The Working Centre. He wrote this review for the Diploma in Local Democracy class.