

Henrikson takes over as Selkirk and District Community Foundation chairman; Martyniw newest board member

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Aaron Martyniw, pictured left, and Gord Henrikson pictured right

Gord Henrikson is the new chairman of the Selkirk and District Community Foundation and with two years left on his term, he's confident the foundation is in a good place.

Foundation board members serve two, three year terms, so Henrikson has been around long enough to know a thing or two about the organization and where it's headed. His experience makes the move into the chair's seat comfortable, and at the same time, he feels the weight of the position all the more so because of it.

He's also not new to the chair's position, having served as co-chair for the past couple of years with Kelly Lewis, who completed her tenure with the foundation this year.

He recalled when Lewis asked if would accept the co-chair position.

"It didn't take much time for me to answer yes, you're on the board for a purpose, but then the thought creeps in, 'what am I going to do?'. You're chair now," Henrikson recalled.

"I don't believe that you should just take a position and become status quo and continue doing what your predecessor has."

Now, as he takes the reigns alone, he said those who held the position before him humble him and he's thankful for the hard work they put in to place the foundation in the enviable position of strength it's in today.

The good-natured Henrikson takes his role as chair very seriously.

"I like to have fun, but we have very important jobs to do here. We're handling donors' generous contributions, and that makes it pretty serious in my mind. They've trusted us with their hard earned money," he said.

“I feel that my role is to continue that tradition to make sure that the board continues to grow and improve.”

He said the board has several tools available to it that will drive future growth. Vital Signs – a report card on the health of the foundation’s communities of Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements – will be released in 2018 and Henrikson said it’s as important to the future of the foundation as its name implies.

“Vital Signs is going to show us areas of our community that perhaps we didn’t know had some gaps and had some need. It’s also going to show us what we’re doing really well, it’s going to confirm that,” Henrikson said.

“I’m excited about that. I think Vital Signs is the vehicle that’s going to show us the direction for the foundation in the future.”

He also said he’s always impressed with the other faces he sees around the foundation’s board table. The nomination committee does a fantastic job of finding the best and brightest to take a seat at the table. In the last couple of years it has filled a need every volunteer board is looking to fill by bringing on two new members, one under the age of 40, the other under 30. Rosalyn Ferguson is the under 30 and she joined in 2016; 36-year-old Aaron Martyniw is new this year.

And while Henrikson concedes board recruitment is a difficult task, the foundation almost seems immune from it, consistently finding great people and solving the riddle of filling that elusive youth gap with Ferguson and Martyniw.

Both come from good families who obviously taught them the importance of community and philanthropy, he said, and he applauds their unique skill set. He has high praise for the board’s youngest members.

“I see Aaron and Ros as quite notably ahead of the curve for typical people their age. They get it,” he said.

And he’s confident they’ll play a crucial role in a task the entire board revels in – spreading the word of who the foundation is and what it does, because even though it granted just under a quarter of a million dollars last year alone, there are still people who don’t know about the foundation.

“We need to continue to communicate with people. The countless non-profits and charitable organizations that we’ve granted money to know all about us and are powerful representatives of what we do, and we appreciate that, we touch a lot of lives,” he said.

“But we need to continue to spread the word, and we’ll do that, in recognition of those who pioneered this foundation and for all those who will benefit from it, on the board or on a receiving end of a grant, in the future.”

Welcome aboard Aaron Martyniw

For Martyniw, who was born and raised in Selkirk, joining the foundation was a perfect fit for him. He works for RBC Royal Bank in Winnipeg, and his career has seen him positioned in several rural Manitoba communities as well as Saskatchewan.

Now that he's back home, he's excited to give back to the community and said becoming involved in the foundation made sense to him.

"Connection to my community, I think that was a big thing. Connection to my home town, I grew up here," he said.

"It's critical to me, even though I don't really have a job that allows me to participate in the local economy because I work in Winnipeg, I thought it was a great opportunity to get back to my community and use some of the skills that I can use to better it. That's my goal."

After graduating from the Comp in 1999, Martyniw spent a year living in San Jorge, Argentina as a Rotary Exchange Student. He was the recipient of a Promoting Aboriginal Student Success (PASS) Award as well as a number of bursaries. He graduated from the Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba, with a Bachelor of Commerce Degree and is currently the Vice President – Commercial Financial Services at RBC.

He said he's excited about Vital Signs and the information it will provide to the foundation. As a banker, he said, he's always looking for data to support decisions, and Vital Signs will do that for the community.

"Vital signs will give a good read of the community, create a good sense of where the needs are, and I thought that was critical in what we do here," Martyniw said.

"We want to align and make the best investments possible to help the parts of our community that need it most and Vital Sign certainly seems like it's going to provide all that research and information we need to deliver that."

In his role with RBC, he works with team that works with not-for profit groups and he said he'll garner as much knowledge as he can from them.

As the foundation's second youngest board member, he's also looking forward to working with the community's youth.

"My second favourite thing that the foundation is supporting is Youth in Philanthropy. I really like that one because it's enabling our younger generation to think about their community and think beyond their cell phones and their

immediate family and think about the greater good and serving their community,” Martyniw said.

“That resonates with me a great deal.”

For more information:

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The SDCF: Here for Good was founded in 1995. It has \$8.9 million in assets and provides grants to community organizations from the interest off the assets. Since incorporation the interest has allowed the SDCF to give \$2.1 million to over 125 local non-profit organizations throughout Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements. The SDCF creates different ways for people to donate by offering a range of different funds that support everything from books for babies to furniture for palliative care patients. SDCF also helps connect donors with community wishes and dreams by allowing families and organizations to create their own endowment funds dedicated to a specific service, issue or project they care about and want to support for a long time. In 2017 SDCF granted \$249,506 to 44 organizations, ensuring that the funds touch a lot of people.