



Selkirk and area a model of reconciliation: Senator Sinclair Together community leads deep research into local needs

For Immediate Release – April 18, 2018 – Three communities north of Winnipeg have done some deep research into who they are and discovered that Senator Murray Sinclair was absolutely right – they are a model of reconciliation, but still have a way to go.

Last year Sinclair was honoured by his hometown of Selkirk, where he went to school and volunteered extensively. He told a packed room that *“Selkirk is what reconciliation looks like.... And we have a long way to go.”*

Since then the Selkirk & District Community Foundation has been working with the community to better understand the region’s strengths and weakness and where it needs to go next. The results are summarized in 24-pages of statistics and calls to action in the Vital Signs: Mind the Gap Report.

The report covers research, interviews and statistics for the Selkirk, St. Andrews, St. Clements and the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and looks at core issues that include inclusivity, housing, health, the income gap, environment, safety, older adults, learning, kids and youth as well as arts, culture, recreation and tourism, says Foundation Chair Gord Henrikson.

“Our report shows that across our region 22 per cent of us identify as Indigenous and in the City of Selkirk alone 35 per cent of residents are Indigenous, that’s higher than Winnipeg at 12 percent and the provincial average of 18 per cent,” Henrikson said.

“And as we worked our way through a year of intense research we could see evidence of a community working together,” he added, citing examples like:

- safety is improved with a new Bear Clan chapter
- more area youngsters are able and ready to enter school than the provincial average thanks in part to the Onashiwini Aboriginal Head Start Program.
- Research on health issues revealed that Indigenous volunteers created a program to pick up needles on the street in support of a needle exchange program.
- A mentorship program at the Selkirk Friendship Centre supports kids – most who are Indigenous - and “aging out of care.”
- The Promoting Aboriginal Student Success Program (PASS) at the local high school is ensuring more Indigenous youths graduate.
- The Brokenhead wetland reserve is helping to protect the local environment.

Senator Sinclair who volunteered and founded the Selkirk Friendship Centre in 1968 said, “It is Selkirk’s unique history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together that makes it a model for



reconciliation. But like all communities there is more to do and the Vital Signs report helps set out what needs to happen to create a healthier community for everyone.”

Marlena Muir, 22, who is active in creating the Selkirk Chapter of Bear Clan Patrol and is the Secretary of the Promoting Aboriginal Student Success Adult Committee, attended meetings to help direct the Vital Signs research.

“I’m excited by the conversations we had about Indigenous culture, engaging more youth in leadership roles and taking better care of older generation and Elders in our community, that is one of the many roles of our youth in Indigenous culture.” says Muir.

The Selkirk & District Community Foundation creates different ways for people to give back to their community, connects donors with community wishes and dreams and provides grants that touch a lot of people. The vision ensures that the SDCF is “*Here for Good*”. SDCF is one of the largest rural community foundations in Manitoba and was founded in 1995. The Foundation has \$9.8 million in assets and provides grants to community organizations from the interest off the assets. Since incorporation SDCF has granted over \$2.1 million to 125+ local non-profit organizations throughout Selkirk, St Andrews and St Clements communities.

For interviews or a copy of the Vital Signs: Mind the Gap report contact Bev Clegg, Executive Director, Selkirk and District Community Foundation /204.785-9755/ selkirkfoundation@sdcf.ca