

Emergency funding brings Betel residents and families together during pandemic



Betel Home residents are able to visit with family members again under new shelters erected outside the building.

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When strong winds blew away shelters set up at Betel Home in Selkirk to accommodate visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic, they also whisked away precious family time for residents.

But all the huffing and puffing Mother Nature can muster won't be able to blow down the new shelter erected thanks to a grant from the Selkirk and District Community Foundation through the Emergency Community Support Fund, funded by the Government of Canada.

"We got the new shelters built and they're perfect," said Betel Recreation Director Matt Mutcheson.

"We have them all set up now, the residents love them, and the families love them. Even if it's raining we can continue to have our visits outside, if it's 30 degrees and the sun beating down, we can have visits outside because they're well protected now."

The home was on lock down for about two months due to COVID-19 and Mutcheson said the outdoor space was really the only chance people had to visit.

"We had originally purchased some shelters and with all the big winds that we had those didn't last long, they got torn up and battered and blew away," he said.

"After that happened we were without shelters for quite a while."

After two months of absolutely no visitors it was important that family members could connect with their loved ones again. When the original shelters were ruined, Mutcheson said they tried to have outside visits without shelter and asked visitors to bring umbrellas and hats to help shield residents from the hot sun.

But now, the new shelter is in place and it's a hit.

“It’s secure, it’s anchored to the cement, it’s a good size so it’s been perfect for us.”

No longer on lock down, Betel is allowing some visitors, but Mutcheson said only those providing care to their loved ones, such as meal assistance or emotional support, are allowed inside.

“There’s very few that are coming in, most are continuing to visit outside,” he said.

“Most of them respect that COVID is still around and it’s best if they stay outside of the building, it’s the safest for everybody.”

Aaron Martyniw said being able to help provide grant dollars through the Canada Emergency Community Support Fund has proven crucial to many charities and non-profits serving vulnerable populations.

“The shelter at Betel Home is a perfect example of the good this funding does,” Martyniw said.

“With the Emergency Community Support Fund and the Community Foundations of Canada we were able to bring families together during the pandemic and that’s a real feel good story that everyone at the Foundation is proud to be part of.”

In total, six projects shared in \$40,000 in funding, including \$3,950 for Betel’s shelter and \$1,000 for a portable oxygen generator; \$10,000 for Nova House for an outdoor play and learn space; \$10,000 for tablets for Inclusion Selkirk; \$750 for communication support for Canadian National Institute for the Blind; \$10,000 to help the Selkirk Food Bank, who was supported in its application by the City of Selkirk, to provide safe and continued food distribution during and beyond COVID 19 pandemic; and \$4,300 for Growing Years Family Resource Centre, supported in its application by Selkirk Friendship Centre, to provide food security and personal health/hygiene items for vulnerable families with children between ages 0 – 6.

The Selkirk and District Community Foundation is a charitable organization that provides financial support to charitable causes and agencies in the region, which includes Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements. Gifts from donors enable the Foundation to support countless groups and individuals in our community. The Foundation has given in excess of \$2.7 million to more than 125 local charities and community organizations during its 25 years. For more details contact SDCF Executive Director Bev Clegg at 204.785.9755.