

Giving Challenge Week Nov. 14-20;

Refugee family perfect example of what your donations can do



The Nelson family are enjoying life in their new community. A SDCF grant helped in their journey to their new life.

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As the annual Endow Manitoba Giving Challenge approaches, a family new to Selkirk is perhaps one of the best examples of the good your kindness and generosity does.

During the Giving Challenge, Nov. 14-20, your donations are stretched by The Winnipeg Foundation and the provincial government, increasing the amount the Selkirk & District Community Foundation receives.

The Foundation supported the Red River Churches Refugee Team in bringing the Nelson family safely to Canada and having the opportunity to live a life of freedom.

The Nelsons, Sohail and Sana, along with their children Ashley and Moses, were sponsored by the Red River Churches Refugee Team and brought to Selkirk from Thailand where they lived in hiding for eight years after fleeing their home country of Pakistan.

Sana had converted from Islam so she could marry Sohail, who is a Christian, a choice that in Pakistan is punishable by death.

Dave Wilkinson, Chair of the Red River Churches Refugee Team, said they worked for three years to bring the Nelsons to Canada. The global Covid-19 pandemic made an already challenging task that much more so and threatened to derail the project.

The Foundation was able to fund the Red River Refugee Team through the St. Clements Anglican Church and ensure the Nelsons could make the move to Selkirk.

“It was difficult over the last few years to do fundraising because of the COVID pandemic and without the support we received from the Selkirk & District Community Foundation it would have been very difficult for us to continue to support the family during the 12-month commitment that we’ve made to help them get settled in Selkirk,” Wilkinson said.

Shauna Curtin, Chair of the SDCF, says welcoming the Nelsons to Selkirk and knowing the reasons for their relocation underscore the importance of the work the Foundation does.

“The Nelsons are a wonderful young family who came to Canada, to Selkirk, to live safely in our country and playing even a small role in that makes all of us at the Foundation so proud,” Curtin said.

“But it’s our donors who should take the credit. Without their commitment to the Foundation, we wouldn’t be able to do this and I, on behalf of the board and staff thank each and every donor for their gifts and their kindness, as I know the Nelsons do too.”

The Foundation supports non-profit, registered charities in Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements.

Wilkinson says the Nelsons arrived in Selkirk last November and they’ve embraced their new home whole heartedly

“They’re a great young couple with two small kids, they’ve been working very hard to get settled, to get some training and seek employment,” he said during an interview in August.

Sana was working at Hearthstone and training to become a health care aide and Sohail, or Sonny, was working as a health care aide at Red River Care Home. Since then, Sana has completed her course and is working as an aide as well.

Wilkinson says there’s more good news from the Nelsons – they’ve purchased a home in Selkirk.

“It’s a big step forward for the family obviously, but they were able to find a place close to the kids’ school, which they were hoping to do, and they’re all moved in,” he said.

“They’re pretty thrilled to be taking that step. They moved in mid-September.”

Wilkinson says he’s happy for the family, but not surprised.

According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Statistics Canada and United Nations HCR Canada, two of three refugees buy houses after 10 years in Canada, almost half live in smaller towns and cities and one-in-four earn between \$40,000 and \$79,999, making them part of the country’s middle class.

“It’s very typical for immigrants in general coming to Canada but refugees in particular to have that kind of success,” Wilkinson said.

“In a way it’s not surprising, they’re obviously highly motivated to begin with, they want to build better lives for themselves and as a consequence of that they work hard.”

To make a donation during the Giving Challenge, you can do so online at endowMB.org (click ‘Make a donation to my foundation’ to find SDCF); drop off a cheque at the City of Selkirk office at 200 Eaton Ave., in the outdoor drop box; call the Foundation at 204-785-9755 and a staff

member will assist you; or visit the Foundation team at the Gaynor Family Regional Library on Nov. 19 between 10am and 2pm, make a donation and enjoy a cup of tea.

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 \$4+ million to more than 125 local charities and community organizations during its 27+ years. For more details contact SDCF Executive Director Bev Clegg at 204.785.9755