



Founding SDCF Board Member Bill Findlater, left, and former Board Member and Treasurer Bill Bodman.

SDCF recipient of Thomas Sill Foundation

\$1.3 million gift

Selkirk & District Community Foundation board members and staff brought a few close friends together for lunch Jan. 26 to share news that the Thomas Sill Foundation had donated more than \$1.3 million to the Foundation.

“It’s an honour to accept this incredible gift to the Foundation from the Thomas Sill Foundation,” said SDCF Chairperson Shauna Curtin.

“It was the Thomas Sill Foundation that really drove the growth of community foundations in Manitoba and now as it dissolves, the Sill Foundation is making yet another gift that will help fulfill our Foundation’s mandate to be Here for Good.”

The Thomas Sill Foundation ceased operations on Dec. 31, 2023 and has created endowment funds with several Manitoba community foundations including SDCF to continue its namesake’s wishes.

Sill was a Chartered Accountant who lived his entire life in Winnipeg. Born in 1905, he was a philanthropist and when he passed in 1986, he wanted his fortune to continue helping communities.

According to the Thomas Sill Foundation website:

“(Mr. Sill) was an astute investor who built a fortune which became the basis for the Thomas Sill Foundation. In his last will, Tom Sill established the foundation which bears his name. His will, a measure of his astuteness, contained only this instruction: ‘I have decided to create an entity for charitable purposes’.”

When the Thomas Sill Foundation was established, its Board, consisting primarily of Sill’s co-workers at Sill Streuber Fisk, swiftly issued a challenge to rural and northern communities to establish or reinvigorate foundations. If a foundation raised \$200,000, the Sill Foundation would provide \$100,000.

Selkirk was among the communities that accepted the challenge and the SDCF was incorporated in 1995 with the Thomas Sill Foundation providing \$2,500 for start-up costs. By 1999, the SDCF had received its \$100,000 from the Sill Foundation.

Two guests at the SDCF’s announcement – Bill Bodman and Bill Findlater – were key players in the establishment of the SDCF. Bodman worked for Sill Streuber Fisk in Selkirk, was treasurer of the Sill Foundation in the early 2000s and later that decade became a director and treasurer of the SDCF. Findlater was a founding Board Member of the SDCF.

Bev Clegg, Executive Director of the SDCF, said the Foundation’s story so far is bookended by the generosity of Thomas Sill, and his importance in the Foundation’s past, present and future can’t be understated.

“The Selkirk & District Community Foundation has been blessed with dedicated board members over the years and owes a debt of gratitude to the many others who worked behind the scenes to get the Foundation established in the mid 90s,” Clegg said.

“But it’s hard to imagine that any of this would have been possible without one man, Mr. Thomas Sill, whose vision of endowment supporting communities is now held by all 57 community foundations that exist in Manitoba. In Selkirk, we are forever grateful to Thomas Sill, and thankful

for all his gifts, from the \$2,500 for start-up, to the \$1.3 million we have announced today – it all keeps us Here for Good.”