

sanctuary youth centre

Imagining a future where all youth are leading healthy and fulfilling lives

News and Stories

January 2026 Edition - A Season of Joy at Sanctuary

MORE THAN BACKPACKS

What an amazing Backpack Giveaway this year! We were overwhelmed by the generosity of our local community and churches, and we are truly grateful. On Friday December 19th, Over 40 backpacks were filled with essentials and special treats for our youth.

Each youth also had their name entered into a draw, and when called, they were able to choose a special gift, items like shoes, jackets, blankets, cologne, perfume, makeup, skateboards, and footballs. There were so many smiles that weekend, and we pray these moments brought joy and hope to our youth this Christmas season. **Thank you for the part you played in making this event such a success.**



TURKEY, TRIMMINGS, AND TOGETHERNESS



What's better than turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, yams, casseroles, homemade macaroni, and pumpkin pie? Honestly, just about nothing.

On Saturday December 20th, a delicious Christmas meal was lovingly prepared by our volunteers, staff, and meal providers, thank you all! For many of our youth, sitting around a table for a shared family meal isn't something they often experience. Watching them enjoy Christmas crackers, great food, meaningful conversation, and the warmth of the season was a true blessing.

With nearly 30 youth, staff, and volunteers gathered together, the day was a beautiful reminder that Sanctuary is more than a centre, it's family. As a special bonus, photos with Mr. and Mrs. Claus brought extra smiles and memories that will be cherished.

Fun and Festive Activities at the Centre



Activities at Sanctuary Youth Centre are always a highlight, and this season was no exception! Our youth had a blast ice-skating at Pearkes Arena, enjoying the thrill of gliding on the ice and cheering each other on.

Back at the centre, creativity and holiday cheer took over during a gingerbread cookie decorating session, expertly led by our staff member Jen Myers. Moments like these not only provide fun and creativity but also help build friendships, confidence, and a sense of belonging in a supportive environment.



PUTTING FAITH INTO ACTION: SHWEINNA & CLAYTON

Shweinna and Clayton have been a fantastic addition to the Sanctuary team this past year. Motivated by a desire to be part of something bigger, Shweinna shares that she felt a calling to this work as a way to put her faith into practice and reflect the love of Christ in action. Clayton was equally eager to serve his community, believing his life experience could be meaningful in supporting youth.

One highlight this season was skating with the youth in December, especially memorable as it was Shweinna's very first time on skates, cheered on enthusiastically by the youth! Shweinna is passionate about fitness and enjoys trail running, strength training, hiking, and climbing, while Clayton is an avid surfer and snowboarder. Shweinna works as a Financial Analyst with MCFD, and Clayton works as a carpenter and serves in the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves. This active couple also loves spending time with their two rescue dogs.

2026 GOALS - MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**AS IRON SHARPENS IRON, SO ONE PERSON SHARPENS ANOTHER.
PROVERBS 27:17**

As we enter the new year of 2026, I want to express my sincere gratitude for your support and encouragement over the past year. Your partnership has played a significant role in allowing us to step into this new season with a sense of excitement, optimism, and hope. After a season of reflection, we have identified several specific goals for ourselves as an organization. One key focus is mentoring. We are hoping staff and volunteers access mentoring, guidance counseling and spiritual direction provided by resources available to us within the Christian community. Alongside this, we have already begun encouraging our youth to seek out someone in their lives who can "sharpen" them in 2026, calling them to become who they are meant to be, something that often only happens through the influence of wiser and more experienced individuals. In fact, after sharing this message on Faith Friday, one youth came into my office, and we spent nearly an hour exploring their occupational and financial goals together.

We are also experiencing transition and growth at the board level. We are grateful to welcome Jennifer Gibbs back, bringing years of experience working with MYST (Mobile Youth Services Team) and the vulnerable youth sector, and Gord, who joins us with strong expertise in governance and Project Management. At the same time, we say a heartfelt thank-you and goodbye to Priscilla Mapa, who has stepped down due to personal reasons. We are deeply thankful for the insight she brought to the board, particularly from her experience in the healthcare profession.

As we move forward, we are also aiming to be more intentional and informed as we come alongside Indigenous youth who frequent the Centre, while committing to keep you—our valued stakeholders—better informed about the ongoing work we are doing and the potential for new beginnings ahead.

As we say goodbye to the past year and welcome the new one, I want to leave you with a prophecy from Isaiah 9:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.



Clayton & Shweinna

Calling All Cooks!

Sanctuary is always serving up healthy, tasty meals for our youth—and we need your help! If you, or a small group you're part of—want to whip up a meal for our centre once a month, we'd love to hear from you. Contact Tracy: tracy@sanctuaryyouth.org



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