75 Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba
1946 - 2021
Proud History | Vibrant Future

PARATRACKS

Winter Issue | March 2022

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
E. ARTHUR BRAID (1934-2020)

SpeediCath® Catheters

Our range, *your* choice

Male / Female | Female | Male

SpeediCath® Standard

- Ready-to-use catheter with our unique hydrophilic coating
- Easy to store and use
- Proven and reliable standard catheter

SpeediCath® Compact Set

- First compact catheter with integrated sterile bag
- Simple and intuitive for everyday use
- Open with a single twist and re-close for hygienic, discreet disposal

SpeediCath® Compact

- First compact catheter
- Easy-grip handle allows for hygienic non-touch insertion and better control
- Reclosable after use for discreet and hygienic disposal

SpeediCath® Compact Eve

- First triangular shape for easy handling and better grip
- One-step easy opening and reclosing
- Stylish and functional design

SpeediCath® Flex

- First dry-sleeve catheter with flexible tip for easy and gentle navigation
- No touch handling supports a hygienic insertion
- Double reclosure for private and hygienic disposal

Empowering you to take control of your bladder health to help live the life you want

Request your free samples of SpeediCath® today and one of our Care Advisors will be in touch with you to complete your order:

🖥 visit.coloplast.ca/free-catheter-SCIMB

☎ 1-866-293-6349

Scan to order samples

Checkout WheelMate™ App
An interactive map to find wheelchair-friendly washrooms and parking spaces

Coloplast

Ostomy Care / Continence Care / Wound & Skin Care / Interventional Urology

Coloplast Canada, A205-2401 Bristol Circle, Oakville, ON
www.coloplast.ca

ParaTracks is s publication of
Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba
825 Sherbrook Street
Winnipeg, MB R3A 1M5

T 204.786.4753
F 204.786-1140
Toll-free 800.720.4933
(within Manitoba only)
info@scimanitoba.ca
www.scimanitoba.ca
Facebook @scimanitoba

With financial support from
Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation Inc.

ParaTracks is published three times each year and past editions are available for viewing and downloading from the SCI Manitoba website.

Circulation: 1,200 copies
Estimated readership: 2,500

Editor: Dan Joanisse
Layout: Adrienne Conley and Dan Joanisse

Advertising rates for photo-ready copy:
Full page $160.00
Half page $87.00
Quarter page $55.00
Business card $33.00

Classified advertisements are free for members of SCI Manitoba

Letters to the editor, submissions, suggestions, and comments are greatly appreciated and can be sent by email to info@scimanitoba.ca or by post to the mailing address above.

Canada Post
Publication Agreement #40050723

75
1946 – 2021
Spinal
Cord
Injury
Manitoba

Proud History | Vibrant Future

Contents

MPF

Thank you to the Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation for their continued financial support of ParaTracks.

Cover image: Penny and Lianne Welburn accepting the inaugural E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award on behalf of Art Braid's family.
See page 10 to learn more about this award.

Meet the Newest Counsellors at SCI Manitoba

My name is Annika Onosson, I was newly hired by SCI Manitoba as a Rehabilitation Counsellor – Indigenous Services. I'm a recent graduate with a Bachelor of Social Work from the Inner-City Social Work Program at the University of Manitoba.

As an immigrant child, my lived experiences led me to pursue a career in a helping profession. My previous work as an Educational Assistant was centred around helping newcomers and students with physical and mental disabilities, by advocating on their behalf. More recently I was a peer trainer through a research study at the University of Manitoba called Team Wheels, providing peer support to individuals learning how to use their wheelchair more efficiently. I'm a mother to two children, who have helped me through my journey of recovery. I look forward to learning and further developing my knowledge and skills in this new position with SCI Manitoba.

My name is Michael Reimer. I joined SCI Manitoba in June of 2021 as a rehabilitation counsellor trainee. While I have only worked for SCI Manitoba for a short duration, I have been a member of the organization since 2007.

In the summer of 2007, I contracted a rare form of West Nile Virus which, after months of intense rehab, left me paralyzed and unable to walk or stand. As an active 15-year-old, my life revolved around sports, particularly hockey and slalom (waterskiing). Unable to do the activities I enjoyed so much, I fell into a deep depression and experienced first-hand the powerful negative emotions that come along with sustaining a spinal cord injury. However, I also discovered the tremendous opportunities that arise if you are willing to push yourself to your limits and discover your true potential.

Prior to joining SCI Manitoba, I was employed as a lawyer in Winnipeg. I ultimately made the decision to depart the practice primarily due to the horrendous and near constant obstacles I faced with respect to accessibility. I also wanted to help people in a different manner than what I was doing in my role as a lawyer.

As a rehabilitation counsellor, my specific role is within transitional services focusing on vocational re-engagement. I derive great pleasure from assisting individuals in exploring potential vocational options, and pursuing a vocational goal. I have found that my first-hand experience has situated me to be better able to serve our members as I am able to connect on both a professional level and a peer level. I look forward to connecting with you.

On November 3, 2021, City of Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman presented (virtually) a Community Service Award to Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba in recognition of our 75-year history of demonstrating excellence and achievement in the important work we do supporting, in an outstanding manner, the social, cultural, and economic well-being of our members. Dan Joanisse, Interim Executive Director, accepted the award on behalf of SCI Manitoba.

> *"Pleased to present Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba with a Community Service Award for 75 years ensuring Manitobans with spinal cord injuries are not facing challenges alone. Thank you, Dan Joanisse, and all your staff for this incredible work,"* wrote Mayor Bowman on his Facebook page following the presentation.

Only 288 Community Service Awards have been presented since the City of Winnipeg began issuing them in the 1950s, so it's especially meaningful for SCI Manitoba to be recognized in this way. Thank you Mayor Bowman!

Staff Email Addresses and Phone Extensions

204-786-4753 or 1-800-720-4933 (within Manitoba only)

Dan Joanisse	Interim Executive Director	djoanisse@scimanitoba.ca	224
Darlene Cooper	Director of Rehab. Services / Assistant Executive Director	djcooper@scimanitoba.ca	225
Adrienne Conley	Executive Assistant	aconley@scimanitoba.ca	222
Denise Balliet	Accounting Officer	dballiet@scimanitoba.ca	221
Gail Burnside	Rehab. Counsellor, Hospital Services / Assistant Director of Rehab. Services	gburnside@scimanitoba.ca	229
Natasha Schreyer	Rehab. Counsellor, Transitional Services	nschreyer@scimanitoba.ca	227
Laurence Haien	Sr. Rehab. Counsellor, Vocational Services	lhaien@scimanitoba.ca	234
Artem Dolia	Rehab. Counsellor, WCB, Seniors and Community Services	adolia@scimanitoba.ca	230
Maria Cabas	Rehab. Counsellor, Indigenous Services	mcabas@scimanitoba.ca	228
Annika Onosson	Rehab. Counsellor, Indigenous Services	aonosson@scimanitoba.ca	223
Michael Reimer	Rehab. Counsellor, Vocational Enhancement and Engagement	mreimer@scimanitoba.ca	235
LéAmber Kensley	Rehab. Counsellor, Health Promotion Services	lkensley@scimanitoba.ca	204-781-0313

No One Succeeds Alone

In the March 2016 issue of ParaTracks, Theresa Mitchell wrote about her spinal cord injury, some of the medical and personal challenges she faced, and the support she received from family and others. She mentioned attending the University of Winnipeg Collegiate in 1998, developing computer skills and completing her high school diploma and two university credits by 2000. Theresa received two awards for her academic performance but was unable to continue with her degree in criminal justice because of health issues.

Theresa also mentioned that a conversation over the dinner table almost two decades later with a relative who worked as an investigator for Service Canada renewed her interest in work and eventually led her to return to the University of Winnipeg to complete her degree.

In this article, Laurence Haien speaks with Theresa about her academic journey and her future.

Well, Theresa you began this part of your academic journey in 2016 and completed your final course in December 2021. I would hope that you have a sense of accomplishment and a feeling of relief?
Yes, major!

Please share with me and the readers what it was like returning to school after a long absence?
Oh, boy! At first, it was nerve-wracking. Myles, my husband, would drop me off. Accessibility Services provided me with a note-taker, but I wanted additional support. So, I was going to class with my home care attendant. She was unable to take the kind of notes I needed. I spoke to Myles and told him I could not do this without him. Myles offered to take notes, convert them into Word and record the lectures.

Thankfully, I had good professors who were accommodating and supportive. As we got going, there was a lot of work. We met lots of people, had fun; everyone loved Myles.

I always sat near the front of the class so I could stay focused and limit distractions. I always had a good experience, meeting other students and working with them.

Accessibility Services at the University of Winnipeg were, by far, the best! If I ever needed anything, my accessibility advisor was always available to calm me. One day, shortly before COVID-19 struck, Myles and I attended the Accessibility Centre. I was going to be doing a field placement for a course. The accessibility advisor and the administrative assistant said, “Do not limit yourself. Any agency that gets you would be blessed.” They always gave me lots of encouragement.

What challenges did you encounter?
I didn’t really encounter challenges. I made friends and have stayed in contact with some. A few

challenges involved doors that were not wheelchair accessible, such as the fire doors. The University of Winnipeg was working on making them accessible.

Did COVID-19 present any educational challenges?
I missed not being able to attend the university and talk with the professors. Zoom meetings were an option, but it wasn't the same. I also missed being able to pop into the Accessibility Centre where I could speak with other students.

The university made a wheelchair accessible study room in the library. It was nice, quiet; we could work away. Two librarians, in particular, were especially helpful, and I missed having contact with them. Everything had to be done online, and not all of the books I wanted were available.

I missed popping into the criminal justice area where students would meet and where the professors had offices. It was during these meetings that students would recommend courses they'd taken or professors that had taught them. I missed talking with some of the professors. I hit it off with one professor immediately. She had a son who was a wheelchair user, like me. She was so encouraging and gave me good advice.


Theresa Mitchell

What supports or services helped you overcome challenges?
Again, the two librarians helped a lot. They directed me towards the books and articles I required or they would send me articles electronically. I had to do a lot of research on sex trafficking for one paper. Both librarians provided me with excellent resources: one provided resources related to the psychological effects, the other resources related to criminal justice.

One thing I regret is not being able to retake criminal law. I got a 'D' in that course. I knew from the first class that something was off. The professor and I did not see eye-to-eye on many things.

I know from personal experience that sitting examinations, writing papers, and dealing with personal demands can be stressful. I'm sure it must have been challenging to juggle your various responsibilities. How did you do this?
One day at a time, one paper at a time, and one exam at a time.

This is where Myles helped me focus. He said, "Do not worry about anything else. Once you finish that, you can move on to the next things."

I always had my course outline in front of me and knew what was due and when. I had the option of getting an extension but rarely used this because I did not want to get behind on other things. I only asked for an extension once. What was really helpful is that I could get my books before classes began and read, at least the first chapter. I remember, for one class, Interpersonal Violence, the instructor required us to read Know My Name. I knew that she would want us to write a paper based on the book. So, I read the entire book before the first class and was ready to go.

I knew how to organize my time and when to rest. Myles and I observe Shabbat, a day of rest, weekly. I would close the computer and my books for twenty-four hours, and we would have fellowship. By the end of Shabbat, I was clear-headed, ready to go, and able to focus.

My social life has been restricted, especially during COVID-19. I have had limited opportunity to see my grandchildren; it seemed as though we were in lockdown almost every holiday. We do speak regularly on the phone. Our eldest grandchild, who is seventeen years old and has a part-time job, did not seem to miss us as much as our nine-year-old granddaughter. Thankfully, we were able to see them during the summer when there was no school. As for friends, my time was very limited and so was my contact.

What did you do to take care of your physical and emotional health?
My faith has carried me a long way. I've had the support of many people that I've already mentioned. I use natural oils and supplements, and this has helped a lot. It is really amazing because I never got sick during my education. It is only in the last while that I've experienced a health issue for which I am receiving treatment.

Knowing what you do now about the rigors of academic life, is there anything you would have done differently or any words of wisdom you'd like to share with the readers?
I would do it all over again. If I weren't finished my program, I would go back and get a master's degree. I had great support from the University of Winnipeg. This past year has been strange because some of the people that I received support from are on sabbatical and some services have become more automated and less personal.

A woman from Accessibility Services was very good at organizing the students and ensuring that, when we got to chatting with one another, the volume was kept low to avoid interfering with students who were working. She was also very good at assisting students who required help with coats or knapsacks.

University was such an encouraging and fulfilling experience. I'm glad I did it and had the courage to do so. I had lots of support from Myles. He would say, "You can do it; don't be quitting now." I would counter with, "I'm too old to do this." Myles would say, "You need to keep yourself sharp."

My advice to others who are considering further education would be:

- Make sure you have an encouraging support system;
- Be self-motivated;
- Be prepared to do the work.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

on the recommendation of the Senate
has conferred on

Theresa Ann Mitchell

who has completed the prescribed course of study and has passed the required examinations
the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in Criminal Justice

with all the rights and privileges thereto appertaining.

In Testimony Whereof The University of Winnipeg has caused its seal to be affixed hereto attested by the signatures of its proper officers in that behalf on this 11th day of February, 2022.

Chancellor

President

Vice-President (Academic)

Dean, Faculty of Arts

If you don't do the assigned readings or attend the classes, you won't earn the marks or the respect of your instructors. My experience was that once the instructors realized how serious I was about education, they would bend over backwards to support me.


Theresa & Myles

Please share with me and the readers a few examples of the memorable things you experienced while attending the University of Winnipeg?
There were so many things. One thing that stands out for me right now was attending the Accessibility Centre. I would often talk with a student who was blind and seventy-two years old. He was working towards a master's degree in sociology. The second he heard my voice he'd say, 'Hey, Doc, how are you doing?' I'd ask him, "How are you doing?" He'd say, 'I'm alive.' We would often discuss faith. It turned out he had had a Messianic girlfriend whom he called "a believing Jew."

Could you tell the readers about your hopes for the future now that you've completed your education?
I want to work with women or victims and help them through the court system. I would love to help them go from victims, to survivors, to those who thrive. It can be done!

Is there anything more you would like to share with readers about your academic journey or your hopes for the future?
I would just encourage anyone who is considering going to university to dip their toe in the water and not to wait as long as I did. Just do it! I would also encourage them to ensure they have support at university, at home or outside of the home. They should find a career that interests them. A good way to do this is to review the course calendar and to find the courses that stir passion. I was just fascinated with criminal justice and conflict resolution.

I almost forgot to mention Student Services. They have great staff that can help students identify which courses they need. For example, students must take science, history or math. I took astronomy and history of Europe to satisfy those requirements. Other things I loved about university were interacting and studying with students and speaking with instructors. And everyone loved Myles. I am so grateful he was there with me.

I am grateful, too, that you were able to secure funding through Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities, which enabled me to attend university, for ensuring that I had what I needed for school, such as books and supplies, and for all of your support over these years.

Thank you, Theresa, for taking this time and for your thoughtful responses. Perhaps, your story will inspire others to pursue education, too.

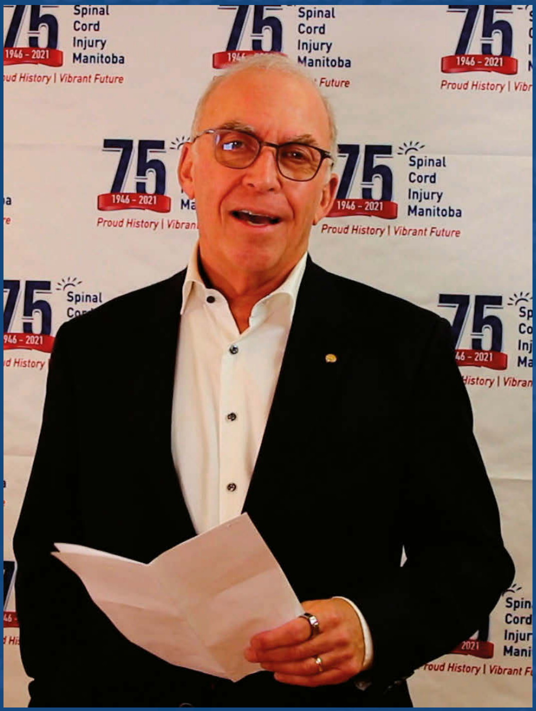
2021 Merit Award

The Merit Award has been given out annually since 1965 to individuals and groups who have made a difference in the lives of Manitobans living with spinal cord injury, and our longtime friend Art Braid, who passed away in February 2020, is an excellent example of someone who has devoted many decades of his life to improving the welfare of our members.

Art served on the board of SCI Manitoba from 1969-2020, on the national board for many years, and also served on the board of trustees for the Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation from 1980-2020. He previously won the Merit Award in 2001 but we wanted to do something special to recognize all of his contributions over all these years, so the board of SCI Manitoba has renamed the award the E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award in his honour, and it's only fitting that he should be the first recipient.

The full text on the plaque reads as follows:

E. ARTHUR BRAID
SPINAL CORD INJURY MANITOBA
MERIT AWARD 2021
Dedicated to the Memory of
E. Arthur Braid
for his resolve and lifelong commitment
to supporting persons living with spinal cord injury
and other physical disabilities
in achieving greater independence,
self-reliance, and full community participation.



The presentation was made on behalf of SCI Manitoba and MPF by Doug Finkbeiner, Art's longtime friend and Chair of MPF's board of trustees, while Art's daughter and granddaughter, Lianne and Penny Welburn, accepted the award on behalf of Art's family.

To watch the 2021 E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award presentation, the full video is available on our YouTube channel at the following address: **rebrand.ly/scimb75YouTube**

Celebrating 75 Years

As many of our readers will know, SCI Manitoba recently celebrated our 75th anniversary of providing essential, life-changing services and supports to Manitobans living with spinal cord injury. On November 3, 2021, we went live on Facebook and YouTube with our host, Ace Burpee from the Ace Burpee Morning Show on 103.1 Virgin Radio, to reflect on our proud history, to remember the people who played critical roles in shaping our organization, and to highlight the impact that our services continue to have for our members and their loved ones.

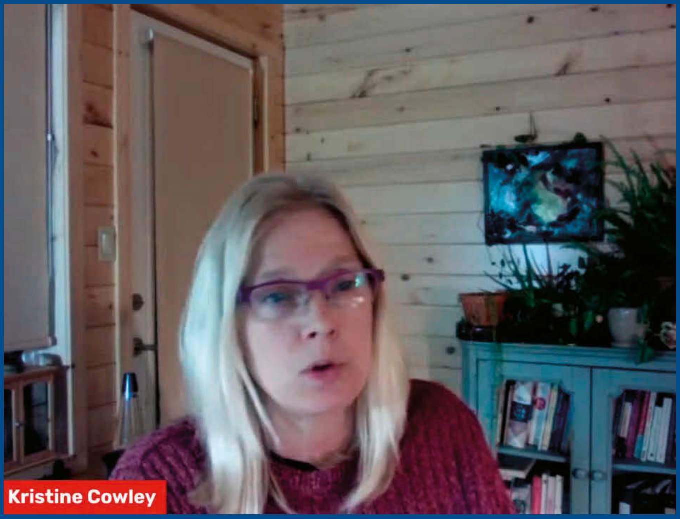
The event featured a raffle with terrific prizes, guest appearances from Rick Hansen, Manitoba Premier Kelvin Goertzen, Bill Adair from Spinal Cord Injury Canada, and Dr. Kristine Cowley from the University of Manitoba's Spinal Cord Research Centre, as well as the inaugural presentation of the E. Arthur Braid SCI Manitoba Merit Award.

We also debuted four new videos on our history, our services, the Merit Award presentation, and a profile on SCI Manitoba member Yvette Cenerini, who has been living with tetraplegia for more than 30 years. Many friends from the past were interviewed and featured in our history video, including John Lane. Harriet Hart, Glen Macdonald, Arnie Schryvers, and Ernie Hasiuk.

Thank you to all who were involved in preparing for and pulling off this event – this would not have been possible without your support. And a big thank you to each of our event sponsors and prize donors:

Sponsors: MPF, the Access Store, Coloplast Canada, MLT Aikins, and Go Orderly

Prize donors: WestJet, CanadInns Destination Centres, True North Sports + Entertainment, Dave's Quick Print, Winnipeg Blue Bombers, and Yvette Cenerini



EVENT SPONSORS

THE ACCESS STORE
We Understand, Personalize and Deliver.

MLT AIKINS
WESTERN CANADA'S LAW FIRM

Coloplast

MPF MANITOBA PARAPLEGIA FOUNDATION INC.

GO Orderly

If you missed the event (or want to watch again), all of the videos (including the full live recording) are available on our YouTube channel at **rebrand.ly/scimb75YouTube**

New Research: Suicidal Thoughts and Medical Assistance in Dying in Spinal Cord Injury

In March 2021, the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) published a research article entitled '*Inside the lived perspective of life after spinal cord injury: a qualitative study of the desire to live and not live, including with assisted dying*', which deals with the difficult subjects of suicidal thoughts and medically assisted dying for people living with spinal cord injury. The purpose of the research was two-fold: first, examine whether people living with spinal cord injury would have considered medical assistance in dying (MAiD) following their injury, and second, whether they would have felt capable of making an informed decision about this option so soon after their injury. The research was conducted by Dr. Natalja Tchajkova, Dr. Karen Ethans, and Dr. Stephen D. Smith and involved structured interviews with 23 SCI Manitoba members.

If you're not familiar with MAiD or its history in Canada, you should know the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in February 2015 that certain sections of the Criminal Code dealing with medical assistance in dying were no longer valid under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Carter v. Canada), and in response, the Parliament of Canada introduced amendments to the Criminal Code (Bill C-14) in June 2016 that allows eligible Canadian adults to request medically assisted death and suicide. In March 2021, Parliament passed Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), which introduced important changes to MAiD, including changes to eligibility and the assessment process.

In its original form, MAiD was only available to Canadians with a 'grievous and irremediable medical condition' with a 'reasonably foreseeable' death. This terminology has a specific definition in the statute but, for our purpose, a grievous and irremediable medical condition means a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability in an advanced state of irreversible decline that causes intolerable and enduring physical or psychological suffering, which cannot be relieved under conditions considered acceptable, and natural death has become reasonably foreseeable. MAiD contained several safeguards to prevent errors and abuse in assessing eligibility and processing requests, including a ten (10) day waiting period between the request and administration of medical assistance in dying. In March 2021, Bill C-7 expanded eligibility for MAiD to Canadians whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable, and in those cases also increased the waiting period from ten (10) to ninety (90) days.

To find out more about MAiD in Canada, visit:
www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/medical-assistance-dying.html

The expansion of MAiD in 2021 to include Canadians without a terminal diagnosis has received significant pushback from many people in the disability community, who express concerns about, among other things, training for the medical professionals responsible for assessing eligibility, what and how information is shared with people requesting medically assisted death, how we value each unique person's life, and how Canadian society views people with disabilities.

It should not be surprising that opinions about MAiD vary considerably among Canadians across our country, but this article is not meant to take a position on medical assistance in dying. Instead, we want to share with you the findings from this research because it is a new line of scientific inquiry specific to people living with spinal cord injury, and also because we know very well the profoundly damaging impacts that often accompany the onset of spinal cord injury, particularly in the early days, weeks, and months.

I had an opportunity to speak with the principal investigator for this research, Dr. Tchajkova, who obtained her undergraduate degree in science at Laurentian University, completed medical school at the University of British Columbia, then did her residency training at the University of Manitoba. Dr. Tchajkova was also responsible for interviewing all the research participants.

If you'd like to read the full research article, please contact our office.

Dr. Natalja Tchajkova

As part of her medical studies, Dr. Tchajkova spent a significant period of time at GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre in Vancouver, which is the largest rehabilitation facility in British Columbia. There she met and became good friends with Walt Lawrence in 2014, who has been living with a complete cervical spinal cord injury for more than 50 years. She said this friendship has had an enormous influence on her career in medicine and her interest in spinal cord injury rehabilitation.

Dr. Tchajkova explains her research on MAiD and spinal cord injury stretches back over five years, almost to the beginning of assisted dying in Canada. During that time, she has practiced medicine in many locations across the country, and as a result of these diverse experiences she feels she has a good understanding of the needs of people living with spinal cord injury in Canada. In particular, her friendship with Walt, who by all accounts has been living an incredibly rich and full life despite his extensive physical impairments, seemed at odds with comments she'd heard from colleagues who simply assumed that people living with spinal cord injury don't want to live. She is aware that depression and suicidal ideation (thoughts of suicide) are more common among people living with spinal cord injury but struggled to find much research effort devoted to this topic.

With medically assisted death gaining wider acceptance, in Canada and elsewhere, she wondered how people who have been living with spinal cord injury would view this option. Surely, hearing the perspective of peers, people who have been through the trauma and turmoil of spinal cord injury could provide valuable insight in defining more sensitive approaches to offering MAiD to people who have recently sustained a spinal cord injury. With this in mind, Dr. Tchajkova's robust qualitative research was born, which had an underlying goal of removing outside opinions and providing a strong, scientifically validated platform for the voices of people with the lived experience to be heard, loud and clear, on this important topic.

And, given her training in medicine, she also wanted to give more thought to the kind of training healthcare providers receive in preparation for such difficult conversations with patients. “Not everyone has the same ability to put themselves in other people’s shoes,” she said. “Without empathy and proper training, the intended effects of well-meaning legislation could easily be undone by front line healthcare workers who have not been exposed to what life can be like after spinal cord injury.” After all, doctors and other medical professionals have enormous power and influence when providing information and advice to patients, so it’s important that these critical touch points in the healthcare system be adequately supported to ensure anyone contemplating medically assisted dying has a fully informed picture of all their options before making their decision.

Here is an excerpt taken form the article abstract that describes the research results and the conclusion:

Results: Half of the participants reported having suicidal ideation within the first 2 years of experiencing a SCI. However, no participants thought that they would have been able to make an informed decision about MAiD during this time. Most participants reported that they were able to adapt and reframe their lives to alter their views. There was higher agreement that MAiD should be available for individuals who had experienced a reframed, informed view.

Conclusion: This study indicates that people with SCI do not feel that informed decision making about ending their life can be made early after SCI despite high levels of reported suicidal ideation in that early time frame. A reframing process helps to facilitate informed decisions about living with a SCI. The reframing process is correlated with opportunities of rehabilitation, peer mentor support, and re-integration into the community.

Clearly, there is a disconnect between what people living with spinal cord injury feel is an appropriate waiting period before they can truly make an informed decision about MAiD (two years or more), and what the law permits (90 days). And the reason for this is also clear – most people who sustain a spinal cord injury require a lot of time, extensive rehabilitation, and substantial support in order to reframe their experiences in a more positive way.

Central to this proposition, Dr. Tchajkova believes, is the role that specialized service providers and peer mentors can play in helping newly injured individuals and their families understand the true possibilities of life after SCI, and this is especially powerful when made available immediately after the injury or diagnosis. Peer mentorship and the services and support available from rehabilitation counsellors with Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba, who are experts in spinal cord injury rehabilitation, normalize the experience and challenge false assumptions about what living with a disability really means.

Additionally, Dr. Tchajkova notes that very often, people who have recently sustained a spinal cord injury feel ashamed or embarrassed, and are not always eager to discuss their grief, sense of loss, and/or thoughts of ending their lives with family and friends. There is sometimes a fear of becoming a burden to others and we should do more to provide a safe space for these conversations between patients and properly trained healthcare providers. And not just physiatrists – this training should be widely available to people working in psychology, psychiatry, ER, and ICU settings as well. “It’s essential that healthcare professionals know how to respond to a patient who says ‘I want to kill myself’,” said Dr. Tchajkova, “and this approach and training should be standardized.” She also believes that talking with patients about mental health and adjustment should receive as much attention as skin, bladder, and bowel care.

Walt Lawrence and Dr. Tchajkova

With respect to the controversial nature of medically assisted dying, Dr. Tchajkova says that all the feedback she has received has been very positive, and many colleagues have even called on her to present the research and findings to their own networks. This is particularly helpful because some doctors are uneasy with taking on the role of assessing patients for MAiD, so this research will highlight the need for, and spur interest in, future research efforts aimed at defining the training needed to support those having the difficult conversations around medical assistance in dying with patients.

Looking ahead, Dr. Tchajkova feels there is a need for much more research focused on MAiD. She’s encouraged by the fact that her research was published in an international scientific journal on spinal cord injury and feels this will help draw more attention to this line of inquiry by other researchers. And while she thoroughly enjoys doing research, she also wants to help other doctors and healthcare providers better understand MAiD from the patient’s perspective, and what patients with spinal cord injury and other conditions are experiencing. The paramount consideration, in Dr. Tchajkova’s view, is that patients should be in control of the process, and we must do all that is necessary to identify and make available the appropriate supports so they can make an informed decision. This learning could then be applied to other populations, so the benefits would extend well beyond people living with spinal cord injury.

The abstract is available at the following address: www.doi.org/10.1038/s41393-021-00619-3

Dan Joanisse, Interim Executive Director

THE ACCESS STORE

We Understand, Personalize and Deliver.

A **leading supplier** in Manitoba for **catheters**

Loyalty Reward Program coming soon

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

MOBILITY EQUIPMENT

ACCESS EQUIPMENT

DAILY LIVING AIDS

Visit Us Today

324B Keewatin St.
Winnipeg, MB
(204)589-8955

f @Myaccessstore
in @The Access Store
@Theaccessstore
@Theaccessstore

For more products visit
TheAccessStore.com

Bring Your MLA to Work

For years, Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba has participated in Bring Your MLA to Work, an event coordinated by the Manitoba Supported Employment Network. Additionally, October has been designated as National Disability Employment Awareness Month in Canada.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month and Bring Your MLA to Work are intended to:

- Celebrate and acknowledge the contributions that Manitobans with disabilities make to the workforce and the economy,
- Encourage and support the hiring of persons with disabilities,
- Recognize workplaces that implement diverse hiring practices,
- Engage MLAs by highlighting the skills and talents of employed persons with disabilities, educate them about inclusive hiring practices in a way that a fact sheet alone never could, and, in so doing, reduce misconceptions about disabilities that have contributed to an underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in the workforce

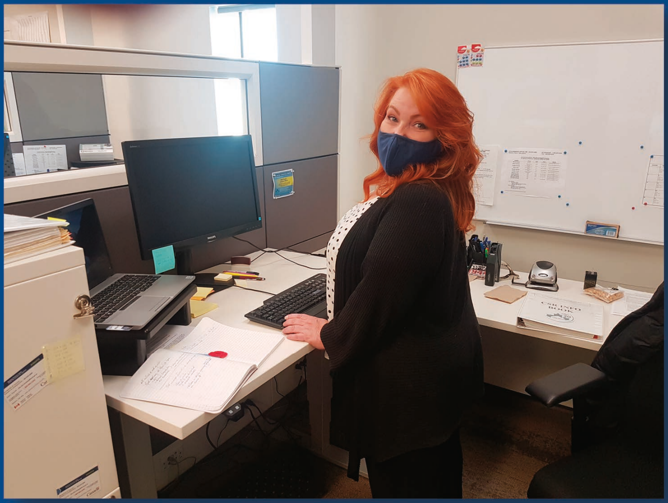
In the fall of 2021, Maxine Critch and Simone Tellier, both SCI Manitoba members, participated in Bring Your MLA to Work. Maxine sustained a T-12, incomplete spinal cord injury subsequent to a helicopter crash in 2009; Simone was diagnosed with a L-02 – S-01 incomplete spinal cord injury resulting from spinal stenosis (narrowing of the spinal canal and impingement of the spinal cord) that required an initial spinal surgery in April 2019 and a subsequent surgery in May 2020.

Maxine Critch

Maxine is a long-time employee of Red River College Polytech and currently works full-time, permanent as a vocational instructor, Introduction to Trades, Aboriginal Education and Access Program, a five-month certificate program intended to prepare Indigenous students academically for enrollment in trades programs. An Indigenous perspective is incorporated into the program and includes the teaching of cultural values, traditions and beliefs, and the promotion of a positive

Malaya Marcelino, Maxine Critch & Laurence Haien cultural identity. Malaya Marcelino, MLA for Notre Dame, participated in Bring Your MLA to Work and attended the Notre Dame Campus where the Introduction to Trades program is offered. She was introduced to Maxine, several staff at RRC Polytech, met students attending the five-month program, was shown the classroom where Maxine teaches, and toured the area and the space where Indigenous ceremonies occur. Maxine provided an overview of her spinal cord injury and its effects, her employment history with the college, outlined some of the challenges that many of the students encounter, and highlighted the supports and resources the college offers to promote student success, and spoke of her goals and aspirations for the future of the program.

Simone has been employed full-time, permanent, primarily as a customer service representative, with Winnipeg - Canadian Forces Housing Agency, Department of National Defense / Government of Canada for the past 16 years but has been the acting chief of business operations since October 2021. She looks forward to returning to her position as a customer service representative when the current position is filled.



Simone Tellier

Simone advised that she enjoys the regular, day-to-day interaction with people that being a customer service representative affords her and for which she has less opportunity in her current acting position. She advised that her employer has provided required job accommodations and has been supportive of her return to the workplace.

Adrien Sala, MLA, St. James, attended Simone's workplace. He was introduced to her co-workers and then convened to the boardroom where he met with Simone, Mireil Kehler, Manager, Housing Service Centre Winnipeg - Canadian Forces Housing Agency National Defense/ Government of Canada and me.

Mireil Kehler, Adrien Sala & Simone Tellier

MLA Sala was given an overview of SCI Manitoba services and my role as the vocational counsellor. Simone outlined the medical issues that resulted in her spinal cord injury, some of the physical and psychological challenges she faces, her work duties and the support and accommodations provided by her employer that enabled her safe and sustainable return to work.

Gratitude is owed to Maxine and Simone for agreeing to accommodate my request for their participation in Bring Your MLA to Work and their willingness to share their return to work stories with MLAs Marcelino and Sala, respectively.

Thanks also to Tracy Brant, Chair, Aboriginal Education and Access Program and Maxine's supervisor at Red River College Polytech, and Mireil Kehler, Manager, Housing Service Centre (HSC) - Winnipeg - Canadian Forces Housing Agency and Simone's supervisor for their participation and for coordinating this event within their respective workplaces.

Finally, I wish to thank Malaya Marcelino, MLA Notre Dame, and Adrien Sala, MLA St. James, for allocating time in their busy schedules to participate in this event and the interest they showed for the work and contributions made by Maxine and Simone to their workplaces.

Laurence Haien, Senior Rehabilitation Counsellor
Vocational Services

Want to learn more about mindfulness?

Volunteers Needed!

For a study of mindfulness on
spinal cord injury mental health outcomes

Providence Care

What is this study?

Looking at how a consumer mindfulness meditation app improves anxiety, depression, stress, pain, quality of life, quality of sleep

Commitment

- 10 minutes/day of mindfulness meditation app use
- 3 rounds of surveys

Are you eligible?

- 18 years or older
- Can speak/read English
- Spinal cord injury
- Own a smartphone to download a mindfulness meditation app

Location

- Entirely virtual

Compensation

- e-gift card upon survey completion

To enroll contact:
Meagan Wiederman
m.wiederman@queensu.ca

Contact the supervisor:
Karen Smith, MD
smithk2@providencecare.ca

Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation (MPF) News

MPF funds go to work in four main areas that are not supported by any other sources in Manitoba: special projects, product testing, research, and direct aid to Manitobans living with spinal cord injury who do not have the necessary financial resources for equipment and/or services. All requests for direct aid are initiated through SCI Manitoba. Individuals must provide information on their finances, explain why they cannot meet the expense within their own budget, and identify any other potential sources to support the request, including potential for contribution from family.

SCI Manitoba thanks MPF for its continued support and commitment to improving the quality of life of Manitobans living with spinal cord injury.

MPF has approved several requests for financial support during the past several months. Since the last issue of ParaTracks, financial support totaling $101,590.00 has been granted. Some of the highlights follow:

- Funding was granted for the purchase and installation of an exterior handrail for an SCI Manitoba member. This modification will allow safe access to and from the member's home with assistance.
- Funding to support research was granted to the Spinal Cord Research Centre for equipment, software, and graduate student trainee stipends, as well as funding to help host an upcoming research symposium in July 2022.
- Funding was provided for new customized seating components for an SCI Manitoba member. The member's current arm gel pad and hand pad needed to be replaced due to age and breakdown. These items will help prevent deterioration of the member's health and maintain independence in the community.
- Funding was granted for several equipment items for an SCI Manitoba member, including a walker, a shower seat, and bath safety rail, that will help the member be as safe and independent as possible upon discharge from the hospital.

Visit MPF's website at www.scimanitoba.ca/mpf. Applications for assistance are available by contacting the SCI Manitoba office at info@scimanitoba.ca or 204-786-4753.

UTI Symptoms and How to Avoid Them

If you have certain bladder problems, you may be at risk for developing urinary tract infection (UTI). It is important that you recognize the different symptoms as an untreated UTI can be harmful to your bladder and kidneys. Some symptoms are obvious signs of a UTI. But be aware of other symptoms, which are more subtle and therefore harder to recognize as UTI-symptoms.

How do I know if I have a UTI?
We have listed some common symptoms of a UTI. These are general guidelines meant to help you with typical questions. You should follow the specific instructions provided by your healthcare provider and the intermittent catheterization solution you are using.

Symptoms that may be related to UTI:
- Pain or discomfort when passing urine
- An urge to pass urine frequently
- Cloudy and strongly smelling urine (unrelated to foods that can cause urine odor)
- Blood in the urine (enough blood to make the urine the color of cranberry juice)
- Unexpected urine leakage
- Fever/sweating or chills

- Pain in the bladder (above pubic bone area)
- Pain in the kidney area (lower back area)
- Headache, nausea
- More fatigued and just feeling poorly
- Confusion – especially in the older population

Some symptoms are obvious signs of a UTI, but be aware of other symptoms, which are more subtle and therefore harder to recognize. Some other symptoms specific to people with SCI include:

- Increased episodes of autonomic dysreflexia (AD). Symptoms of AD include a pounding headache, sweating above injury level, goosebumps below injury level, feeling of slow heart rate
- Fever over 38° C/101° F
- Unusual spasticity
- Sudden difficulty with your bladder management routine

If you experience any of the symptoms listed above, you should consult your healthcare provider!

Now that we know the symptoms we're looking for when experiencing a UTI let's discuss how we can avoid them. There are several precautions that might help you prevent recurring urinary tract infections.

Here are some steps you can take:

- **Get enough fluids:** Drinking lots of water dilutes urine and flushes bacteria out of the bladder. If you regularly empty your bladder as directed by your healthcare provider, you may remove urine with potential bacteria each time you catheterize. Make sure you drain the bladder completely each time.
- **Maintain good personal hygiene:** Bacteria from improper hand washing, or bacteria near the urethral opening, can be introduced into the urinary tract when using a catheter.
- **Regularly empty your bladder completely:** Staying on a regular schedule and emptying your bladder completely with intermittent catheterization, reduces the amount of time urine sits stagnant in the bladder. Each time you catheterize you remove the urine in the bladder along with any bacteria that may be present.
- **Use a sterile catheter every time you catheterize:** A well-lubricated, (hydrophilic coated or pre-lubricated) catheter may make the process more comfortable and may lessen the friction during insertion and withdrawal of the catheter.

If you found this blog post to be helpful and want to read more about UTIs, download our free eBook to keeping your bladder healthy! Understanding Urinary Tract Infections – Coloplast Canada at **rebrand.ly/SCIMB-Coloplast-UTI**.

Experiences of Indigenous Members During COVID-19

Jessica Reick is a 34-year old Indigenous woman who was diagnosed with spinal cord injury twenty years ago after a car accident. She lives in Winnipeg with her husband, Bernard, and their two young boys, 6-year old Bernard Junior (BJ) and 4-year old Jackson (JJ). She states the pandemic has been a very difficult time with ups and downs, but in general the pandemic brought her family closer together. By spending more time together, each member of the family values and appreciates each other more. Parenting two young boys full of energy and curious about everything is not an easy task at the best of times, but the pandemic created even more challenges. Living in a two-bedroom apartment makes it very difficult to create enough space for everybody. They really miss their house, which has been under renovation for two years because the pandemic also stalled the construction. Jessica says "the pandemic will not stay forever, it will go away sooner or later, so hold on to hope."

L-R: Bernard, Jackson, Jessica, and Bernard Junior

Alex Mannigway is from Peguis and was diagnosed with spinal cord injury 37 years ago after a medical procedure. He has been working during the pandemic at the Band office, which keeps him very busy. Family is very important to him and he feels that spending time with his 7 grandchildren as much as possible brings joy to his life. He has not been doing too much traveling because of the restriction but is vaccinated and he is taking care himself. He encourages other people to remain hopeful.

Gloria Littlejohn lives in Roseau River/Letellier, Manitoba. She was diagnosed with spinal cord injury after a car accident 51 years ago. COVID-19 was also difficult for her, even though she received her vaccines and followed other precautions. This did not stop Gloria from maintaining contact with other people in her community and her family. During the pandemic, living alone was very lonely and isolating, but now she is happy because a nephew moved in with her recently. She said she keeps herself busy by helping other people in the community, taking them shopping or calling them just to talk. Trying to be involved in other people's lives and helping others helps Gloria stay connected and active. She encourages everybody to reach out to others who may be feeling lonely and isolated, to form new relationships, and instill a sense of hope. Keep busy, and don't be afraid to reach out for help.

Linda Kematch lives in Pelican Rapid, Manitoba. She was diagnosed with spinal cord injury 36 years ago. The pandemic has been very difficult for her living alone. Isolation and loneliness followed by depression were present on and off during the pandemic. Anxiety about getting the virus and getting sick if she visited face-to-face with family or other members in the community is still very real. Even after receiving two vaccinations against COVID-19, she is sometimes reticent to receive home care services from the community. The fact that her home care workers are shared with other community members creates a higher risk of contracting the virus, if not carefully monitored. Maintaining her relationships with friends and family is important so she uses her phone and Facebook to communicate with them daily. She focuses on her health and entertains herself by watching movies and videos on YouTube.

Linda Kematch

SCI Manitoba extends its sympathies to the families of the following loved ones who recently passed away:

Leslie Bieganksi
Robert Buchanan
Paulette Chaput
Winston Esperanzate
Phillip Fairgrieve
Lorne Halcrow
Donna Helm
Roy Jaster
Dorothy Koetke
Ian McKinney
Kathleen Napaokesik
Joan Ranick
Orville Recknell
Maurice Sanderson
Christopher Sargent
Randy Vankoeveringe

We Want Your Feedback

ParaTracks

SCI Manitoba Is interested in getting your feedback about ParaTracks, our long-standing publication focused on providing local information and stories on all things related to spinal cord injury in Manitoba. We have every intention of continuing to make ParaTracks available, but as more and more people move to online sources for news and information, we wonder, quite naturally, if you would prefer to receive ParaTracks electronically as well. With costs for printing and mailing inching upwards every year, it may be possible to provide a full colour, magazine style version of ParaTracks while reducing our costs by simply offering an electronic version, thereby lowering the number of printed copies. So, please take a minute and let us know your preference by answering this simple question:

In what format would you prefer to receive ParaTracks in the future?

1. **Print edition (what you currently receive)**
2. **Electronic edition (a PDF document emailed to you)**
3. **Electronic edition (a link sent by email for downloading or viewing ParaTracks on our website)**

To provide your response, please go to the following address and submit your feedback: **rebrand.ly/ParaTracks-Survey**. If you cannot respond to this survey online, please contact our office at 204-786-4753 extension 222 or toll-free within Manitoba at 800-720-4933 extension 222 to indicate your preference.

Email Subscription

SCI Manitoba is continuing to build an email list that can be used to send our subscribers important information and news about our organization, our services, and other items of interest to people living with spinal cord injury in Manitoba. Please note this email list is separate from our list of clients, who have already given consent to receive services from SCI Manitoba. The email list, however, requires a separate consent for us to be able to send you news and information by email.

If you're already on our email list, we're asking you to take a few minutes to complete and submit the online subscription form at the link noted below. This will update your profile with your current email address, name, and phone number. If you're not already on the email list, please take a few minutes to subscribe so you'll never miss out on important news updates, research opportunities, and other noteworthy announcements of interest to Manitobans living with spinal cord injury.

rebrand.ly/scimanitoba-subscribe

By subscribing or updating your profile information, you are giving your consent for SCI Manitoba to communicate with you about news and information that we believe will be of interest to our subscribers. Once subscribed, you may unsubscribe at any time, for any reason, without impacting in any manner the services you are currently receiving, or may receive in the future.

75
Spinal
Cord
Injury
Manitoba
1946 – 2021
Proud History | Vibrant Future

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

YES!

Count me in as a member of Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba Inc. All members receive "ParaTracks" SCI Manitoba's newsletter and voting privileges at the Annual General Meeting.

Members also receive discounts at various health care supply stores:

Stevens Home Health Care Supplies (10% off supplies & equipment), The Access Store (10%), Northland Home Health Care (10% off medical supplies) and Fido Mobile ($10 off monthly phone plan.

PLEASE ENTER MEMBERSHIP FOR:

NAME:

ADDRESS:

CITY: **PROV**

POSTAL CODE: **PHONE**

E-MAIL:

(PROVIDING YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS WILL HELP SAVE ON MAILING COSSTS)

SIGNATURE: **DATE:**

I wish to select the following category of Membership:

☐ **MEMBER: $15—$24**

☐ **SUPPORTING MEMBER: $25—$99**

☐ **SUSTAINING MEMBER: $100—$249**

☐ **CHARTER MEMBER: $250—$499**

☐ **PATRON MEMBER: $500 AND OVER**

All Monies donated remain in Manitoba to support SCI Manitoba Inc. An income tax receipt will be issued for any amount over $15.00. Sustaining, Charter and Patron Members will receive recognition of their generous contribution in the context of events such as our Annual General Meetings or in the programs of other SCI Manitoba functions.

☐ **NEW** ☐ **RENEWAL**

Make cheque payable to: Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba Inc.

Mail to: 825 Sherbrook Street, Winnipeg MB R3A 1M5

IMPORTANT!

By signing above, you are consenting to the use of your personal information (name and address only) by SCI Manitoba for the purposes of sending out SCI's newsletters, membership cards and receipts, reminder notices and meeting notices. SCI Manitoba does not sell or trade personal information and does not rent out its mailing lists.

For more information

Phone: 204-786-4753
Toll-free within MB: 1-800-720-4933
Fax: 204-786-1140
Email: info@scimanitoba.ca