

United Way supports Métis youth

United Way's investment in the Circle of Care program at Lii Michif Otipemisiwak (LMO) has made a difference in the lives of many Métis youth in our community. From assisting a vulnerable female youth, who otherwise would have hitch hiked to an unknown destination in the lower mainland, by buying her a bus ticket to buying another young man a pair of ice skates so he could go skating with his cousin in the wake of his mother's sudden and tragic death.

According to Colleen Lucier, Executive Director at LMO, the connection they have with United Way has opened doors they wouldn't have considered.

"We had no funding for a celebration on Louis Riel Day but through United Way we were connected to the United Steelworkers Local 7619 and they agreed to host a pancake breakfast," she says. "Not only did this event bring the community together it also made a direct impact in the lives of four youth who were there that day."

One of those youth is Philip, an 18-year-old Métis youth from Blue River. Since relocating to Kamloops in September 2012 LMO has helped establish him in the community and is now helping him navigate applying to Thompson Rivers University.

"They've helped me set a direction for where I'm going in life," he says. "I appreciate everything they've done for me."

LMO provides a variety of culturally based preventative and support services to Métis children, youth and families residing within Kamloops.

Wendy Chernivchan is the Michif Circle of Care Facilitator who works with Philip and other youth at LMO. She offers one-on-one support that includes everything from accessing services to daily living skills like grocery shopping, cooking lessons and filling out job or rental applications.

"The funding from United Way is a cornerstone of the program. It allows me to provide youth financial stability when they have no other means," Wendy says.

The impact of USW 7619 on Philip did not stop at the Louis Riel celebration. He joined them a few months later and volunteered at the Canadian Mental Health Association's turkey dinner and plans to get out with them again soon.

"My mantra is that no one ever walks alone," says Jim McCarthy a member of USW 7619



and a long-time volunteer in the community and supporter of United Way.

As a community impact organization, fundraising is only a part of what United Way does. Collaboration and bringing together donors and Community Partners is also an important part of their work.

"At LMO we are well-connected to the Aboriginal community but not very connected to the non-aboriginal community. United Way has been that bridge for us," Colleen says.

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