

news  
@  
westhill

  
Spring 2024

## Message From Mike, WHU Board Chair

As we move into the spring season, the community at West Hill has been very active. The Board meets at least monthly and we had our Annual Congregational Meeting on February 25. There is much happening as we move ahead with our Action Plan Team (APT) lead by Jean Skillman. This group is coordinating the recommendations that were the outcome of several congregational meetings and the work facilitated by Joe Manafò and his Listenology group. Please see Jean's APT report on page 4.

We are in the process of selecting candidates for the positions of Visionary Leader, Community Care Coordinator, and Pastoral Charge Supervisor as well as considering how best to deliver quality hybrid presentations, possibly under the direction of a Technical Manager. Many people have worked many hours to advance us to our current status. Jean, Florence, Deb, Karen, John and others deserve our appreciation and thanks. The Board met on January 9, Feb 13, and March 12, with a special meeting taking place on March 5 to review the role descriptions of the leadership team mentioned above. We are fortunate to have the advice and input from the Ministry and Personnel Committee.

The finance committee, chaired by Walter and supported by our Treasurer, Joe Hatlett, have submitted a budget that has a significant deficit forecasted of \$104,000 for 2024. It is the plan of the Finance Committee and the Board to address this deficit by appealing to our supporters to consider increasing their donations through PAR, Canada Helps and other sources. Contributions to our revenues include the monthly payment on our vendor take-back mortgage, interest earned on our investments, and fundraising amounts from our Friendship and Hospitality team chaired by Barb Russell.

Our leadership group is meeting with the Shining Waters Regional Council to access funds for specific programs and outreach from the Region and the United Church of Canada (UCC). A new group will be formed to conduct fundraising and stewardship initiatives.

We appreciate the ongoing direction from Rev. Greg Daly who continues to be a support and guide for us at our Board and congregational meetings. Greg was assigned to us by the Shining Waters Region (SWR) and continues with his full-time ministry at Beach United. Gretta remains on the Restorative Care Program, and she has advised us that she will retire at the end of May. A committee has been struck to propose ways to celebrate and thank Gretta for her 27 years of ministry at West Hill. The committee will be chaired by Anne Jackson. It is uncertain whether Gretta will be able to participate due to her ongoing health concerns.

Other relevant items from the last Board meeting include the establishment of a Strategic Planning Committee chaired by John McKechnie. This group will be recruited to report to the Board, as well as connect with the SWR and the UCC.

Our Sunday morning gatherings usually are comprised of 20 or more attendees at 62 Orchard Park and 35-40 cameras joining on Zoom. Those joining remotely are from Ontario, Western Canada, the USA, England, Scotland, and Africa. Our Celebrations team, chaired by John McKechnie, has consistently provided engaging speakers, excellent music from Scott and soloists, Babette and Donna, and consistently improving technology benefiting from the skills of Glenn, Aaron, and Aiden. The tech team at the control table is to be thanked as well. Thanks also to Kathleen Blakey who puts the newsletter together.

Travelling our journey together - May love abound.

Mike, Lawrie  
Board Chair

# First Nations News

## LITTLE NATIVE HOCKEY LEAGUE TOURNAMENT - 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY! A Celebration of the Game and Culture This Year's Theme: Honouring the Water

What might seem like a normal March break week for many will for some be an immersion in one of the largest hockey tournaments in the country!

From March 10-14, 2024, an estimated 10,000 hockey players and families from around Ontario descended on Markham as the Little Native Hockey League is celebrating and hosting its 50th edition of its tournament.

This event showcases the talent of Indigenous youth, and celebrates the connection of sport, history and identity. It is rooted in Indigenous practices, amplifies important beliefs, and celebrates hockey with inclusiveness and generosity.

This year's theme is "Honouring the Water" and seeks to teach participants and the wider community about the water crisis in different Indigenous regions in Turtle Island (North America). A documentary film, *Boil Alert*, about the water crisis will have been screened twice on Sunday as well.

The tournament started in 1971 with 17 teams. In 2024, LNHL is expecting 245 teams with at least 38 teams being for girls only while dozens of others are mixed gender.

On Sunday, the Markham Civic Centre will host music, hoop dancing, drumming and other artists, and there will be a sunrise ceremony on Sunday and a sacred fire will be lit and remain burning all day.

Pamala Agawa will be there in her capacity as a coach. Agawa is from the Batchewana First Nation and works with the Keewatin-Patricia School Board. She got involved with the LNHL because of her daughters. Agawa did not play hockey until she was in her twenties, but she grew up watching her dad.



Pamala Agawa of Batchewana First Nation

gave them an overwhelming sense of pride for who they are. "I guess I lived vicariously through them because when I was young girls didn't really play hockey. Only boys did."

Jacko encouraged her daughters and grew to love the game, too. She started off as a volunteer handing out programs during the tournament. After a few years as a volunteer, her professional skills were called upon



Agawa says that although her own daughters live far away from their Indigenous community, the opportunity to play in this tournament filled the need for connectedness. It creates life-long friendships. It's like a big family reunion. "I won't stop playing when the girls age out," she told me via Zoom. "Staying involved teaches the youth to grow up and lead."

Marian Jacko is a mother, lawyer, and advocate, and was formerly the president of the LNHL. She is from the Wiikwemkoong First Nation on Manitoulin Island and has worked on panels about anti-racism work in hockey.

Her involvement began when her young daughters wanted to play hockey more than 15 years ago. They played rep hockey in the city but participating with their community



Marian Jacko, Children's Lawyer for Ontario, and former President of LNHL, and Board Member of Hockey Canada

and she helped the executive create a strategic plan. She was asked to join the executive board and then became president in 2019. Jacko was named to Hockey Canada's board of directors in 2022.

Many of the LNHLers play in almost every tier of hockey. This particular tournament is impactful for many reasons.

"The LNHL started as a response to racism experienced by kids in Manitoulin Island," Jacko said. Only Elder James McGregor remains of the original founder's group of Earl Abotossaway, Norman Debassige, and Jim Debassige. Former chief of the Whitefish River First Nation, Elder McGregor, will be honoured at a gala on Saturday night.

The original founders were keen to create an educational and welcoming space for Indigenous youth to play hockey. Indigenous youth continue to face racism in traditional hockey models to this day. But the LNHL is created by Indigenous people *for* Indigenous people and weaves in four pillars that participants adhere to: sportsmanship, respect, citizenship, and education, tied together create a bond that "honours all people."

New inductees will be announced into the LNHL Hall of Fame, including former NHL coach Ted Nolan, and former PHF and NWHL player Kelly Babstock.

Travel from the remote communities and hotels for the week are afforded through some government funding and corporate sponsors. But more regularly, the day after the tournament ends, communities start fundraising for the next year. This event is the annual highlight for the players and the families.

Indigenous hockey players have left their mark on the game. NHL players like Carey Price and Ethan Bear are very well known. There are several Indigenous women's hockey players in the PWHL: Jamie Lee Rattray, Abby Roque, Jocelyn Larocque and Victoria Bach. This gives young players an opportunity to visualize what they can achieve, while basking in family and community love and encouragement as they grow.

Little Native Hockey League is not only the essence of what hockey means, it's a model of how hockey should be. (*excerpts from CBC Story March 8/24 by Shireen Ahmed*)



Jim McGregor, third from left, was joined by Stan Jonathan, Chris Simon and Mervin Cheechoo for induction into the Little NHL Hall of Fame in 2016.

*submitted by Ruth Gill on behalf of First Nations Study Group*



# Action Plan Update

The Action Plan Team has been working on Staff Profiles for the past 3 quarters. Consultations have been made with United Church advisors, with Rev. Greg Daly, with consideration for the relevant employment standards that our employee-employer relationships require. The roles are finalized, and the board has had an opportunity to see them in detail.

Soon, a Search Committee will take on the job of posting the roles to the United Church Hub as well as other employment boards.

We do not know who will apply, but we are asking for a modern mix of skills, including ministerial, administrative, and technical, for these refreshed roles in Visionary Leadership, Community Care and Technical Direction and Management. We have been careful to be upfront with the particularities of Westhill with regards to the language and values base.

The congregation will be invited to be involved. The congregation will be informed as we make our way through the uncertainties into a refreshed future.

*submitted by Jean Skillman*

# HONOUR THE TREATIES



T: 416-283-7011 F: 416-283-4457 john@autotechniques.ca  
6531 Kingston Road, Scarborough, ON M1C 1L5



**Dave Beaulieu**  
416-284-0552  
Fax: 416-284-4314  
dave@johnscarpet.com

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# West Hill Community News

## Outreach Committee

Thank you West Hill community for your support of the Second Harvest February campaign. A cheque for \$300 from West Hill United will be sent to Second Harvest.

On Sunday March 24, we will have a Soup Lunch. The donations received will support Feed Scarborough, a local foodbank.



## Crafty Crew

The Crafty Crew continues to meet on Tuesday afternoons after Labyrinth. They enjoy the social conversation and the chance to make a difference in the community. Besides making hats and scarves, they are creating more Friendship Blankets. Richard Cammidge and Carrie Worrobess were past recipients of these special lap blankets.

## Memorial for Sue Thomas

Many willing hands helped make the celebration easy by sharing the load for refreshments. We planned for 50 to 60 and we were right on 50. Leftover fruit, veggies and cookies/squares were enjoyed after the gathering the next day. WHU also provided flowers. A receipt for \$50.82 was submitted to the Benevolent Fund to support Peter. Next time, we will provide gluten-free sandwiches too.

Thank you to all those willing hands for helping with Sue's Celebration of Life.

## Tina Resettlement Committee

Tina continues to enjoy the new apartment in East York and her online PSW course (M-F 5pm - 10pm). Her allowance from IRCC is \$1584/month which includes \$900/month for rent. She will receive this amount until February 2025 when her apartment lease will be renewed for another year (likely) and IRCC will reassess her rental needs. (She gets \$590/month for rent and IRCC tops that up by \$310 to pay the rent of \$900/month. Next year's lease may change, I suppose, and that's why the re-assessment).

Tina wore glasses in Nairobi and requires them here. City Optical at Victoria Park and Sheppard is associated with COSTI and she received her exam, glasses and 6 months of contact lenses for no charge. The Optometrist who helped Tina could not have been nicer.

In December 2024 Tina will have to start paying back the travel loan. A minimum payment per month is required. She also has her OSAP loan to repay.

I have asked Eve Cassavant to help Tina find an appropriate desk, a chair, and desk lamp for her studies. Eve lives close to Tina and can take measurements for space.

The Benevolent Fund has provided a total of \$734.05 to cover Tina's expenses through February. Thank you to all for supporting the Benevolent Fund.

*Respectfully submitted by Barb Russell*



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## Spring Equinox Blessing

*From its winter sleep the earth is awoken,  
The cycle of nature, true and unbroken.  
The promise of spring, of life, a new start,  
To fill you with faith in mind, body and heart.  
The perfect wheel of nature keeps spinning,  
With proof that an ending, is just the beginning.  
Rejoice in this season, may it fill you with peace,  
And may the blessing of nature, for you, never cease.*



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M1C 1B6

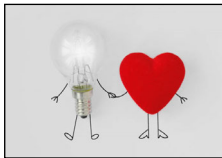
# Please Join Us For Our Weekly Service and Other Regular Gatherings

**Sunday Morning Gathering/Perspective(s) ~ 10:30 AM (in-person & Zoom)**



**Tuesday Morning Labyrinth Walk ~ 10:30 AM followed by refreshments in the church.**

**Tuesday Afternoon Crafty Crew ~ Tuesdays from 1 to 3 PM in the church**



**Wednesday Afternoon or Evening Colloquy Sessions  
2 & 7 PM on Zoom ~ March 27, April 10 & 24, May 8 & 22**

“Newcomers” are requested to email [ellendinerman7@gmail.com](mailto:ellendinerman7@gmail.com) prior to the colloquy they would like to attend.

**Thursday Morning Coffee ~ 10 to 11 AM (on Zoom)**



## **West Hill United Board of 2024**

Board Chair: Mike Lawrie

Ministry and Personnel: Rotating Chair Representation

Communications and Marketing: Aaron Sheedy

Education and Growth: Donna Hall

Friendship and Hospitality: Barb Russell

Community Care: Babette Oliveira

Celebrating the Spirit: John McKechnie

Technology: Glenn Cockwell

Finance: Walter Shouldice (to April 30, 2024)

**Secretary: Vacant**

Members at Large: Jean Skillman (Action Plan Committee Chair), and Florence Soknacki

Regional Representatives: Annemarie Leepel and Louise Lawrie

Trustees: Glenn Cockwell (Chair), Jim Hyland, and Frank Kilroy

Pastoral Charge Supervisor: Reverend Greg Daly

**West Hill United**  
*A warm place to find yourself*

62 Orchard Park Drive, West Hill, ON M1E 3T7  
[www.westhill.net](http://www.westhill.net) 416-282-8566 [westhill@westhill.net](mailto:westhill@westhill.net)

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