



Laidlaw
FOUNDATION

**EXPANDING FOCUS:
RENEWED COMMITMENT AND
STRENGTHENED PURPOSE**

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

OUR MISSION

Laidlaw Foundation supports young people marginalized by the justice, education, and child welfare systems to be healthy and engaged, by investing in innovative ideas, convening interested parties, advocating for systems change, and sharing learning across the sector.

OUR VISION

An inclusive society in which all young people, especially those who are disproportionately marginalized by the justice, education, and child welfare systems, have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Cover Illustration: Amber Waboose

Amber Waboose (Odemin Mkwaa Kwe) is an Ojibwe artist from the Batchewana First Nation, ON, situated within the Robinson Huron Treaty territory. Her work includes both traditional and contemporary forms, ranging from porcupine quillwork on birch bark to mixed media and two-dimensional art.

At the top, geese in flight represent changing seasons. Below, the Three Sisters garden—corn, beans, and squash—highlights the importance of traditional agricultural practices. The figures in the garden embody community learning and the passing of teachings across generations.

The canoe and fish symbolize responsible water stewardship, while the moose, porcupine, and plants showcase the medicines and nourishment found in the land. The collage features sustainably harvested materials, each with its own spirit and teachings from ancestral practices.

Together, these images celebrate Indigenous youth leading land-based projects that nurture community, relationships with nature, and knowledge of plants and medicines for a sustainable future.

CONTENTS

- 02** Mission and Vision
- 04** Staff
- 05** Board of Directors and Committees
- 06** Message from the Chair and Executive Director
- 08** Investment and Finance
- 09** Asset Allocation
- 09** Impact Investing
- 11** Tapestry Community Capital
- 12** Strategic Plan
- 16** Black Youth Fund and Environmental Racism
- 18** Indigenous Youth and Community Futures Fund
- 20** Tekanónhkwa Restoration and Land-based Learning
- 22** Youth Action Fund
- 23** Kwetu Youth Hub
- 24** Partnership with Law Foundation of Ontario
- 25** Philanthropic Declaration of Action
- 26** Family, Board and Staff Funds
- 28** Nathan Gilbert Youth Innovation Fellowship
- 29** In Memoriam
- 32** Acknowledgements

STAFF

04

LAIDLAW FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Musa Alturk
Finance
Coordinator



Amanda Bernard
Director of
Indigenous
Programs



**Aldeli
Albán Reyna**
Director of Grants
and Community
Initiatives



Jehad Aliweiwi
Executive Director



Haia Iman
Research,
Learning,
and Evaluation
Lead



**Diana
Demjanenko**
Operations
Manager

SHARED STAFF:

Angella Reid - Events Coordinator and Office Assistant

Neus Gilvonio - Technology Services Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Paul Nagpal, *Chair*

Benjamin Mitsuk, *Vice Chair*

Tim Apgar

Polina Kosareva

Sandra Kagango

Julia Laidlaw

Christopher McFarlane

Randy Steuart

Jesse Waugh

Kathryn Simmers

Menaka Yerramilli de Rege

OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Paul Nagpal, *Chair*

Benjamin Mitsuk, *Vice Chair*

Sandra Kagango, *Chair of Finance and Audit Committee*

Christopher McFarlane, *Chair of Granting Committee*

Jehad Aliweiwi, *Secretary*

FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Sandra Kagango, *Chair*

Paul Nagpal

Randy Steuart, *Vice Chair*

Jesse Waugh

External Advisors

Heather Brubacher

Ken Gibson

Sumant Inamdar

FAMILY COMMITTEE

Tim Apgar, *Chair*

Kathryn Simmers

Julia Laidlaw, *Vice Chair*

Menaka Yerramilli de Rege

External Advisors

Jessica Hammell

Melissa Laidlaw

Jamie Laidlaw

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Randy Steuart, *Chair*

Sandra Kagango, *Vice Chair*

Tim Apgar

Paul Nagpal

External Advisors

Hanifa Kassam

Ewa Townsend

IMPACT INVESTMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Paul Nagpal, *Chair*

Polina Kosareva

External Advisors

Hanifa Kassam

MJ Sinha

Narinder Dhani

GRANTING COMMITTEE

Christopher McFarlane, *Chair*

Polina Kosareva, *Vice Chair*

Benjamin Mitsuk

External Advisors

Koubra Hagggar

Teddy Syrette

Paul Bailey

Irwin Elman

Celine Isimbi

GOVERNANCE AND RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE

Benjamin Mitsuk, *Chair*

Jesse Waugh, *Vice Chair*

Julia Laidlaw

Menaka Yerramilli de Rege

Christopher McFarlane

INDIGENOUS YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Carissa Coe

Joel Jocko

Carole Monture

Eternity Sutherland

Tamara Takpannie

Chevaun Toulouse

BLACK YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Celine Isimbi

Deborah Banjaw

Jeremiah Bowers

Keziah Oduro

Koubra Hagggar

Kayode Akande

Tobi Olumurewa

Zhané Stimpson

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2025 was a year of renewal and reaffirmation. During the year, we developed and adopted a new strategic plan, marked the 10th year of our commitment to supporting the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, and provided funding to dozens of youth-led initiatives supporting young people and their families and communities. We also revised current granting programs and developed new ones. In addition, the Foundation was recognized as one of Canada's most equitable funders.

During the year, the Foundation's Board and staff developed and adopted a new five-year strategy that builds on the strengths and the learnings of the past 10 years. The 2025 – 2030 plan renews Laidlaw's focus on youth impacted by the justice, education, child welfare systems and climate justice. The plan is designed to be adaptable and responsive to external realities and the changing environment around us.

To best fulfill our commitment to our mission, partners and communities, we have developed new funding priorities and enhanced our core funding priorities. The Foundation has reaffirmed our work in four areas, each of which stems from our long-standing commitments, experience, and investments:

1. Affirming commitments to reconciliation by supporting Indigenous youth – led change
2. Confronting anti-Black Racism by partnering with Black youth
3. Deepening contributions to young people, their families and communities who are disproportionately impacted by the justice and child welfare systems and underserved by the education system
4. Expanding focus areas to include the impact of climate change on youth, in addition to justice, education and child welfare



Paul Nagpal,
Chair of the Board

Jehad Aliweiwi,
Executive Director

Jehad Aliweiwi (left) and Paul Nagpal (right)

The new granting strategy will adopt a funding model that abandons focus on emergency and is instead responsive to multi-year, long-term planning. We believe that when priority-setting is handled with clarity, dignity and community centredness, resulting strategy becomes a road map to value and impact led by community solutions.

As we develop the programming focus, we are mindful of imminent political changes and an expected shift to the right, which will have an adverse impact on young people and their communities.

We are also paying close attention to the fast-growing anti-DEI movement, which represents an immediate threat that will disproportionately affect youth; Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities; and 2SLGBTQ+ and gender diverse communities among others. The new five-year plan affirms Laidlaw's commitment to equity across all its operations and relations. We will intentionally apply diversity, equity, justice, inclusion, and belonging lenses to all decisions we make and systems we develop to achieve the Foundation's objectives. The change pathway begins by supporting and connecting diverse youth who promote justice and inclusion, seek equity, lead social movements, and demand change.

The year 2025 marks a decade since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report, calling on all sectors to confront Canada's colonial legacy and work toward meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. This anniversary provided an opportunity for Laidlaw to reflect on its own journey of acknowledging the origin of its wealth, reckoning with historical harms, and committing to always learning the truth and advancing reconciliation.

We commemorated this milestone by releasing the *Ten Years After the Release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Report*, a reflection on how Laidlaw Foundation has acted on its commitment to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) and the Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action (2015).

While the year was marked by renewal and reaffirmation, it was also a year of losses. In 2025, the Foundation lost three leaders who contributed significantly to its growth and reach over the past 50 years. Jeff Smith, a family member and the second son of the only daughter of R. A. Laidlaw, passed away in April. In November, Jamie Laidlaw, the eldest son of R. G. Laidlaw, passed away after a long illness. The Foundation's first and longest-serving Executive Director, Nathan Gilbert, died after battling illness for several years, in September. In the pages of this report, we pay tribute to their work and celebrate their enduring legacy. Laidlaw is forever grateful for their contributions to philanthropy and communities across Ontario.

With all of that, we are heartened to see the energy of youth rise to the challenge of the moment. The Foundation's strategic renewal is anchored in our long-standing commitment to youth wellbeing and based on strong relationship with young people and their communities. We also believe that relationships must be built before they are needed. This is why we continue to invest in our ability to build mutually supportive relationship across various sectors and communities.

We continue to explore our role as a foundation, even as our fundamental purpose of supporting youth-led change remains constant. Advancing equity through granting, operations, and investing is our compass.

No annual message to members is complete without acknowledging the dedication and leadership of the Board of Directors and staff team of the Foundation.

As always, we invite you to read the 2025 report that showcases the works of our grantees, introduces the new strategy, and reflect on Laidlaw's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. We welcome feedback and comments on the activities, granting and current focus of the Foundation.

INVESTMENT AND FINANCE

INVESTMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2025

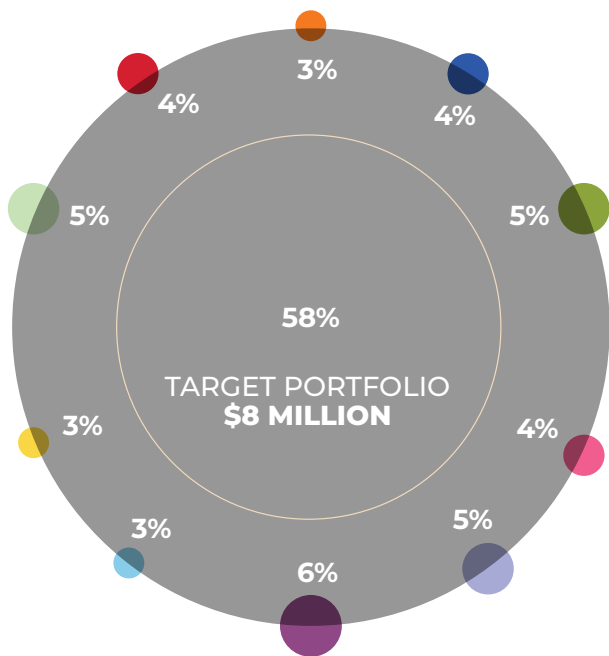
	2025 \$
EQUITIES:	
Canadian	\$ 27,467,373
Exchange-traded fund	28,873,368
Foreign	-
	56,340,741
FIXED INCOME:	
Money market	628,290
Bonds	24,384,897
	25,013,187
POOLED FUNDS:	
Foreign equities	-
Cash and temporary	836,556
Receivable and other	161,549
	82,352,033
IMPACT INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO:	
Canadian pooled equity funds	1,526,822
Fixed income funds	650,000
Cash	156,636
	2,333,458
Private capital investments	1,500,663
	\$ 86,186,154

The Foundation's fixed income investments include bonds and funds. The total grants expense reported in the audited financial statements includes reversals of previously approved grants that were cancelled or adjusted during the year. As a result, the total may not equal the sum of the grants listed in this report.

ASSET ALLOCATION

The information below is based on market value plus uncalled capital. Unlike committed capital or market value alone, this calculation captures changes in investment valuations and returns of capital.

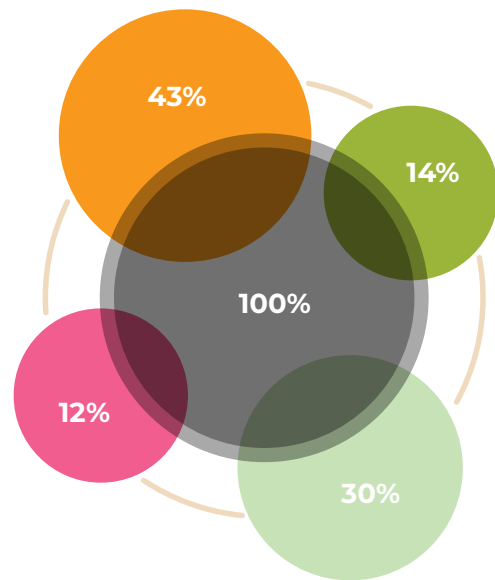
Laidlaw's total assets are approximately \$80 million, which makes the 10% target portfolio size \$8 million.



- Active Impact Investments Fund II
- BKR Black Innovation Fund
- Community Forward Fund
- Fair Finance Fund Community Bonds
- Marymount SIB
- NMF Rental Housing Fund II
- Raven Indigenous Impact Fund I
- Raven Indigenous Impact Fund II
- Spring Impact Capital Fund
- Windmill Community Bond
- Unallocated Capital

IMPACT INVESTING

The Foundation has a strategy to align investment decisions with granting and programming priorities. The Foundation's desire to explore additional ways that our assets serve our mission and purpose has led to the creation of the impact investment strategy. This includes a 10% carve-out of our endowment to be invested in opportunities, in addition to expectations in revenue, that have specific social and environmental outcomes.



- Social Impact Bond
- Private Equity
- Private Debt
- Real Assets



Pictured: Tapestry's Co-executive Directors Ryan Collins-Swartz and Mary Warner



Pictured: Joy Duncan, who co-leads the Readiness Program

TAPESTRY COMMUNITY CAPITAL: HAVE YOU CONSIDERED COMMUNITY BONDS?

Non-profit organizations are used to funding their work through grants and donations. With Laidlaw's support, Tapestry Community Capital is introducing more organizations to a new financing tool—community bonds—and enabling more investors to support them. The returns are far-reaching.

Community bonds are interest-bearing loans, similar to traditional bonds. Instead of being issued by a government or corporation, they are issued by a non-profit, charity, or co-operative to support projects that benefit the community—everything from affordable housing to schools to renewable energy projects. Community bonds provide organizations with flexibility (the organization sets the term and the rate of return), access to money from new sources, and the opportunity to build longer-term relationships with investors who care about the impact of a project as much the financial return. These bonds give retail investors (individuals) a stake and a sense of ownership in projects that benefit them directly. Tapestry has been promoting and facilitating the use of community bonds since 2018, and the market for them is growing.

Still, too many organizations don't even know about them. A grant from Laidlaw is changing that. To start, the grant enabled Tapestry to recruit five youth-led and youth-serving organizations into an intensive peer-learning program where they explored the feasibility of community bonds for their own projects. Through conversations, analysis, and investor consultations, participants were able "to understand a new way to finance their projects," says program co-leader and Tapestry campaign manager Heather Watt-Kapitain. "This was a whole new concept for a lot of them." Each organization gained valuable insights about their finances, their potential investors, and the work they would have to do before proceeding with community bonds.

One of the five, YMCA BC, gained much more: They were the participant best positioned to issue community bonds right away, and the grant is enabling them to continue working with Tapestry through the next stages of their campaign. A big campaign: \$10 million. Furthermore, Tapestry will help YMCA BC to share their story, so they can inspire other non-profits to consider community bonds too. Says Heather, "having a successful bond raise in a sector seems to build confidence for other organizations to follow suit." Laidlaw's grant could spark many more community bond campaigns.

Even the most supportive and engaged community benefits from additional tools to fully realize a campaign. Tapestry's other new venture is Weave, Canada's first and only fund investing in issuers of community bonds. Through Weave, institutional investors can make large contributions that are spread out across a number of projects. Weave can help to kickstart a campaign or get it across the finish line. And because Weave invests in no more than 25% of a campaign target, the bulk of any project's funding still comes from the community, keeping the community in community bonds. Laidlaw has also invested in Weave, as an affirmation of their commitment to aligning their granting and their investments.

If you've never considered using or investing in community bonds, perhaps now you will. Both Laidlaw and Tapestry certainly hope so.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2025–2030

The plan envisions a mixed model that blends grant-making and direct activities including convening, advocacy, and research. The core of this plan is the Foundation’s determination to address funding gaps for young people who are leading change agents in creating thriving communities.

Over the next five years, the Foundation will deepen its focus on supporting youth-led community-change initiatives through direct grants, convening activities, research, and policy initiatives. This strategic plan maintains our focus on young people, building on past successes and reflecting on learnings and challenges.

HOW WE LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THIS STRATEGY

The basis for this strategy comes from three main sources:

1. *Impact of Laidlaw Foundation’s 2019–2024 Strategic Plan: A Summative Evaluation Report*
2. *The State of Black and Indigenous Youth in Ontario: An Examination of the Experience and Impact of Policing on Black, Indigenous and Racialized Youth*
3. Board and Staff Planning Retreat and SWOT Analysis

We began the process of developing the strategic plan by facilitating two days of executive, staff, Board, and Laidlaw family member discussions during the March 2024 Board and Staff Planning Retreat. This retreat allowed the Board to collaboratively surface strategic themes for the 2025–2030 strategic plan. Based on the recommendations of the 2019–2024 midway summative evaluation report, a major outcome of the retreat was the Board agreement that the Foundation would allow for continuity and refinement of the 2019–2024 strategic pillars. Therefore, the 2025–2030 strategic pillars are modelled on the learning and advancements made by the Foundation in the area of community investment, strategic philanthropy and strong governance since 2019.

IMPACT ON CURRENT GRANTEES

We recognize that no one has more stake in our new plan than existing grantees. All commitments to current grantees, including multi-year grantees, will be met. All payments will be made in accordance with the terms of the approved grants. However, applicants for new funding starting January 2025 will be assessed in accordance with this plan.

MISSION

Laidlaw Foundation supports young people marginalized by the justice, education, and child welfare systems to be healthy and engaged, by investing in innovative ideas, convening interested parties, advocating for systems change, and sharing learning across the sector.

VISION

An inclusive society in which all young people, especially those who are disproportionately marginalized by the justice, education, and child welfare systems, have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.



Illustration: Grace Swain

VALUES

The core values that guide the collective efforts of the Board and staff members at Laidlaw Foundation are as follows:

- **Reconciliation:** Our commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is reflected in our operations, granting, and investment portfolios.
- **Engagement and Empowerment:** We commit to engaging and empowering young people in decision-making and governance.
- **Accountability:** We are accountable to our grantees, our Foundation, and the larger communities of which we are a member.
- **Equity:** We embed equity in all of our policies, practices, processes, and interactions.
- **Responsive:** We consult, engage, and work with youth on issues that matter to them, from ideas to implementation.

OUTCOME FRAMEWORK

FOCUS

We are targeting our investments and activities to support young people who are disadvantaged by the **criminal justice system**, pushed out of the education system too early, overrepresented in the **child welfare system**, and facing **environmental racism**. We recognize that for young people caught in these systems to be healthy and engaged, change is needed in institutions, policies, behaviours of people in authority, and society as a whole.

PILLARS

1. **Invest in youth-led solutions: Support youth leadership for social change**
2. **Dismantle systems barriers to advance equity: Challenge the status quo**
3. **Centre our Mission, Vision, Values, and Theory of Philanthropy: Transform how the philanthropic sector operates**

KEY OUTCOMES

We are working toward positive impacts at different levels. At the end of five years, we will know we are successful when:

- **Black, Indigenous, and racialized youth with lived experience in the four issue areas, their families, and their communities have better outcomes.**
- **Grantees have the support they need to address issues they want to confront.**
- **Institutions elevate and incorporate young people into decision-making roles and positions.**
- **Systems change to address the unique needs of all young people.**
- **Foundations and the philanthropic sector enact more equitable practices to recognize all forms of leadership and contribution.**

Our Theory of Philanthropy is influenced by theories and research in the philanthropic sector and the Foundation's commitment to positive youth development. Our guiding principle is the belief that all Ontario youth have something positive to contribute and that the Foundation plays a key role in promoting positive youth outcomes in their local communities.

The Foundation recognizes that its impact is not always linear and is best realized and explained through its relationships. The Foundation belongs to a network of stakeholders striving for positive youth development and believes that all are better served when stakeholders elevate and amplify the voices of the youth they aim to impact. This relationship model, based on the Foundation's commitment to engaging and including youth, is embedded in the way we build capacity, engage our stakeholders, and advocate for change.

This strategic plan promotes three strategic pillars. Each pillar will be supported by a combination of granting, convening, and researching activities to facilitate and expand impacts on communities we invest in and work with.

PILLAR 1.

INVEST IN YOUTH-LED SOLUTIONS: SUPPORT YOUTH LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Laidlaw understands the importance of funding youth leadership to transform, advocate, and advance long-lasting improvements in the areas of criminal justice, education, child welfare, and environmental racism. Laidlaw Foundation remains a youth funder and continues to focus on Black, Indigenous, and racialized youth as they are often the most impacted by these systems, as demonstrated anecdotally and through evidence-based research.

PILLAR 2.

DISMANTLE SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO ADVANCE EQUITY: CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO

Laidlaw Foundation will continue to amplify and champion the work of grantees and those doing work on the ground. Storytelling is a major component of our work as we support grantees to highlight the impact of their work, which

increases their access to funding and partnerships. The Foundation firmly believes in supporting youth direct action and organizing and we affirm our commitment to championing grantee-led and community-driven advocacy.

PILLAR 3.

CENTRE OUR MISSION, VISION, VALUES, AND THEORY OF PHILANTHROPY: TRANSFORM HOW WE OPERATE

As a leader in the youth grant-making sector, Laidlaw believes that community and principles of public good should inform true responsive philanthropy. Ensuring we have strong governance that meaningfully centres Black and Indigenous leadership within our Board, advisors, committees, volunteers, and social procurement is a priority for the next five years and beyond. Laidlaw affirms its commitment to fund grassroots and community-based organizations, advocate for funding of non-qualified donees, and dismantle racism within philanthropy.

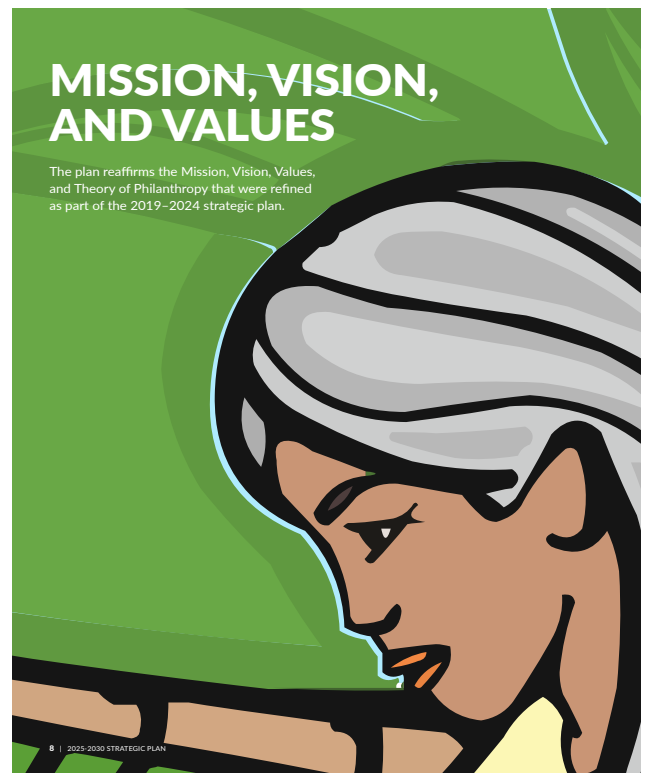




Illustration: Amber Waboose

\$564,041

BLACK YOUTH FUND

BLACK YOUTH FUND - \$564,041

ORGANIZATION NAME	AMOUNT
Calgary Foundation	\$500,000
The Lawson Foundation	\$50,000

Alexis's thought process for the design was to represent growth, the unlimited possibilities of the future, and ultimately what the fund can help Black youth do. She thought a book represented the chapters of your life, where opportunities that have yet to present themselves abound. The items bursting out of the book represent the possibilities.

ADVANCING BLACK YOUTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Laidlaw is in the process of developing a long-term strategy to specifically invest in Black communities through our inaugural Black Youth Fund (BYF). This work is informed by the *Unfunded: Black Communities Overlooked by Canadian Philanthropy*, report which found that “grants to Black-serving organizations represented a meagre 0.7% of total grants during the 2017 and 2018 fiscal years.” The Unfunded report catalyzed the creation of Black philanthropic organizations in the country, including the Foundation for Black Communities, whose endowment included a capital transfer from Laidlaw.

BYF will prioritize Black youth-led initiatives. The development of this fund is guided by Black youth advisors representing different regions of Ontario (Windsor, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Peterborough, Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton, and Greater Toronto Area) and under the guidance and blessings of Elder Aina-Nia Ayo'dele, who grounds our work in African Indigenous practices, Black ancestral teachings, and a decolonized approach to leadership.

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

In 2025, Laidlaw renewed its strategic focus. While we continue to prioritize youth impacted by the justice, education, and child welfare systems, we are now embedding environmental justice across all our funding streams, including the Indigenous Youth and Community Futures Fund (IYCFF), Youth Action Fund (YAF), and the new Black Youth Fund (BYF).

BUILDING ON OUR LEGACY

This renewed focus builds on Laidlaw's long history of environmental stewardship. Since the 1950s, Laidlaw has been an environmental advocate, including being a founding supporter of Great Lakes protection initiatives, Quetico Park Foundation, and other significant conservation efforts in Canada.

ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Environmental racism refers to the disproportionate exposure of Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities to polluting industries and environmentally hazardous activities (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2020).

Examples include:

- Mercury contamination in Grassy Narrows First Nation
- Long-standing boil water advisories on reserves
- Resource extraction on Indigenous lands.
- Environmental impacts of glyphosate in Ontario's forestry industry
- Waste management inequalities that displace families and communities
- Displacing Black communities from neighbourhoods for infrastructure projects
- Erosion of Little Jamaica through decades-long delays in building the Eglinton LRT

By integrating environmental justice into all three streams, we aim to provide sustainable funding to effect lasting systemic change across all granting programs.

\$924,540

INDIGENOUS YOUTH AND COMMUNITY FUTURES FUND

Through the Indigenous Youth and Community Futures Fund (IYCFF), Laidlaw Foundation invests in opportunities for Indigenous youth to develop and lead projects where they are immersed in their lands, languages and cultures; participate in everyday acts of resurgence, reclamation and wellbeing; build relationships within and across Indigenous communities; and learn about and define for themselves what reconciliation means.

INDIGENOUS YOUTH & COMMUNITY FUTURES FUND - \$924,540	
ORGANIZATION NAME	AMOUNT
Brunswick House First Nation (Wahkohtowin Development)	\$30,000
Auntie's Place	\$30,000
Waabinong Head Start Family Resource Centre (Bawaating Child Welfare Warriors)	\$30,000
Dwadewayəhsta? Gayogoho:nq?	\$30,000
13 Moons Land Based Learning	\$30,000
Finding Our Power Together	\$30,000
Indigenous Arts Collective of Canada (Kawiraksa Krew)	\$30,000
Georgian Bay Mnidoo Gamii Biosphere	\$30,000
Grand River Employment & Training (The Wijiindamaan Land Restoration Project)	\$30,000
Wikwemikong Board of Education (Wikwemikong Pontiac School)	\$30,000
Tsi Tyónnheht Onkwawén:na (Skátne Aetewatéweyenhsthe ne Ohwentsyà:ke ([For us to learn together on the land])	\$30,000
Whitefish River First Nation	\$30,000

INDIGENOUS YOUTH & COMMUNITY FUTURES FUND - \$924,540

ORGANIZATION NAME	AMOUNT
Feather Carriers (NMKNS)	\$30,000
Minwaashin Lodge Women's Support Centre (Aunties on the Road: Indigenous Full Spectrum Doula Collective)	\$30,000
Unity Charity (Youth Healing Lodge)	\$30,000
Endaayaan Awejaa	\$30,000
Kaitlin Rizarri (\$5,000) and Foodshare (\$25,000) (Tkaronto Plant Life)	\$30,000
Barrie Native Friendship Centre	\$30,000
Waabinong Head Start Family Resource Centre (Youth Odena)	\$30,000
Matachewan First Nation	\$30,000
The Waterways Collective	\$30,000
Moose Cree First Nation (Learning From Lake Sturgeon)	\$30,000
ENAGB Youth Program	\$30,000
Community Safety Initiatives Thunder Bay (Regional Multicultural Youth Council)	\$30,000
Indigenous Arts Collective of Canada (Haudenosaunee Universe)	\$30,000
Jamii Esplanade (Anishinaabeg Palestinian Alliance)	\$30,000
Iron and Earth (Algonquin Youth Collective)	\$30,000
Maadookii Seniors Group (Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON) Anishinaabemowin Collective)	\$30,000
Carleton University (Centre for Indigenous Support and Community Engagement)	\$30,000
Finding Our Power Together (Oshkico)	\$30,000
The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal People in Canada	\$50,000
Canadian Roots Exchange (Indigenous Youth Roots)	\$10,000
Social Innovation Canada (Wasanay Mnis)	\$10,000

TEKANÓNHKWA RESTORATION AND LAND- BASED LEARNING: A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS

In 2018, Dave Skene of Wisahkotewinowak Gardening Collective and Garrison McCleary, Indigenous Studies Professor at Conestoga College, wondered: Where can we, as urban Indigenous people, have a space of our own—land on which to learn, celebrate, and participate in ceremony? By 2022, in a collaboration with the City of Kitchener, that dream began to take shape with the founding of an urban Indigenous land futurity along the Grand River. Today, a Laidlaw-supported Indigenous youth collective, Tekanónhkwa (Day-ga-NOON-kwa) Restoration and Land-Based Learning, is engaging Indigenous youth, and people of all ages, in restoring and stewarding the land for generations to come.

The land Tekanónhkwa is working with was well-known to the Mississaugas of the Credit. For hundreds of years, “they would paddle the Grand and plant their crops for the season,” says collective co-founder Ryan Duncan of Cowessess First Nation. The Pennsylvania-German settlers who arrived in the area about 200 years ago practised conventional farming, and over time the Indigenous presence in the area diminished. Tekanónhkwa is gradually reintroducing native species and reinstating traditional agricultural techniques practised by the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Peoples to the Indigenous land futurity.

Tekanónhkwa Restoration and Land-Based Learning emerged out of the Wijindamaan Project, a three-year NSERC grant to help establish the futurity. Wijindamaan (we-JIN-da-men) means “a place where we gather to do something” in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe). Tekanónhkwa (Two Medicines) was chosen through consultation with Mohawk language speakers and Elders and is not easily summarized in English. It involves two related concepts, medicine and reciprocity. Megan Sanderson, biologist on the team, states, “We see ourselves as working together with the land in reciprocity.”

Uplifting Indigenous cultures and connecting people with the land is an important element of the collective’s mission. “A lot of my friends are reconnecting Indigenous people who have lived in the city their entire lives,” says Ryan. “Being able to get them involved in working with the environ-

ment and making a difference in the community and having them connect with their culture has been something that I take real pride in.”

Establishing relationships and partnerships, including with fellow Laidlaw grantee 13 Moons Land Based Learning, has been a priority. The IYCF grant funded employment opportunities, honoraria, workshops, and visits to First Nations communities across southern Ontario, where members of the collective have been able to connect with and learn alongside more youth. The grant also allowed Tekanónhkwa to make its annual Fall Feast free to attend.

Land restoration involves everything from planting, weeding, and watering to ecological surveys, invasive-species mitigation, and food processing. Work Bee Wednesdays, Frog Fridays, and a host of recurring, seasonal, and one-off events require volunteers. All are welcome. “Everyone needs to be involved with this kind of work,” says Megan. “It can’t be left totally up to Indigenous peoples.” “The land has no door,” adds Ryan. “Please come out, come learn, come plant with us. We love connecting with people, we love connecting with communities. Come be part of something bigger.”

To answer Tekanónhkwa’s call, check their social media feeds for upcoming events, then drive to the end of Lookout Lane, walk down the road from Pioneer Tower, and head toward the river.

The land will be there.



Illustration: Amber Waboose

\$2,174,073

YOUTH ACTION FUND

The Youth Action Fund (YAF) offers grants to grassroots initiatives working with youth who are underserved by the education system and overrepresented in the justice and child welfare systems. YAF prioritizes Black and Indigenous youth-led initiatives. The development of this fund was guided by a series of consultations with experts and advocates in the field.

YOUTH ACTION FUND - \$2,174,073	
ORGANIZATION NAME	AMOUNT
Toronto Metropolitan University (Ryerson University)	\$100,000
ENAGB Youth Program / Sour Springs Longhouse	\$100,000
Northwest Black Collective	\$96,200
Ardoch Algonquin First Nation / Restoring Our Roots	\$100,000
Project Agape	\$99,638
The People of Tomorrow	\$100,000
Disability Justice Network of Ontario	\$100,000
Caribbean African Canadian Social Services (CAFSCAN) / Injaz	\$88,792
Power to Girls Foundation	\$100,000
Youth Association YAAACE	\$100,000
The Neighbourhood Group Community Services / Uthando Collective	\$100,000
Tapestry Community Capital	\$111,000
In conjunction with the Law Foundation of Ontario	\$1,000,000

KWETU YOUTH HUB: LISTENING, LEARNING, AND LETTING YOUTH LEAD



The youth served by the Kwetu Youth Hub in Thunder Bay are flourishing because co-founders Kristen Kowlessar and Jendaya Hopkins are always listening and learning. The Hub is a project of the Northwest Black Collective and a Youth Action Fund grantee (2024–2026). It offers programming to meet the needs of Black youth and bridge the gaps that disproportionately affect them. The Hub seeks to support community building, cultural empowerment, wellness, education, and life skills.

When the Hub launched in January 2025, offering educational support was a priority, as many Black youth are refugees and new immigrants who arrive in the middle of the school year. The Hub purchased school supplies, workbooks, and resources spanning preschool to high school and established a weekly tutoring program to provide youth with consistent, one-on-one attention. “We have seen the difference that it’s been making for these youth,” says Kristen. “We met some who were very shy and were struggling in school and now they look forward to coming out every week and they are so social and more self-assured in the community.” Cooking classes have also proved popular, and more classes, outings, and outdoor activities are planned for 2026.

Kwetu (kway-too) means “ours” or “our place” in Swahili, and the Hub really does belong to the youth. They have a say in programming decisions and are given the space to be themselves. “The youth know what they’re missing, what they need,” says Kristen. “My job is to just give them the platform and the resources to do what they want to do.”

The right partnerships have been crucial to the Hub’s success. “We have been very picky and intentional about who we are partnering with,” says Kristen. “We want to be so sure that it’s places

or organizations that aren’t just using access to Black youth as a way to say that they’re meeting their own equity goals.” Valuable partners include the Thunder Bay & District Youth Wellness Hub and local public libraries.

Kristen is grateful to Laidlaw Foundation for empowering her and Jendaya to pursue their vision and give back to their community. “To feel that somebody out there believed in what we were doing, that was huge.” And the work will continue even after the grant ends. “We are going to do our best to keep leveraging the partnerships we’ve been able to make through this to keep offering services to the youth. It truly has made such an impact on them, but also on us.”

Kristen hopes more foundations and funders will take a chance on communities like hers. “There are a lot of people who don’t live in the highly populated areas that get the bulk of opportunities. People get by with what they have and they’re able to make a lot out of a little, but investment in those communities makes a world of difference.”

As Laidlaw embarks on a new five-year strategy, Kristen has this advice: Stay true to your values. Do what feels true even if it’s unpopular or hard. Maintain your commitment to youth and to underrepresented populations.

And never stop learning.

\$1,000,000

PARTNERSHIP WITH LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO

Through funding received from the Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO), Laidlaw Foundation funded organizations in Ontario that provide legal education, do legal research, and have a focus on legal content. As part of this collaborative granting process with LFO, Laidlaw staff selected 10 organizations—based on Youth Action Fund criteria as well as Law Foundation of Ontario criteria—that are actively engaged with the criminal justice system and legal education, that often intersect with the education and child welfare systems. These 10 organizations successfully received a one-year grant of \$100,000 for a total amount of \$1,000,000.

YOUTH ACTION FUND 2025 PROJECTS - LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO LEGAL EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE GRANT - \$1,000,000

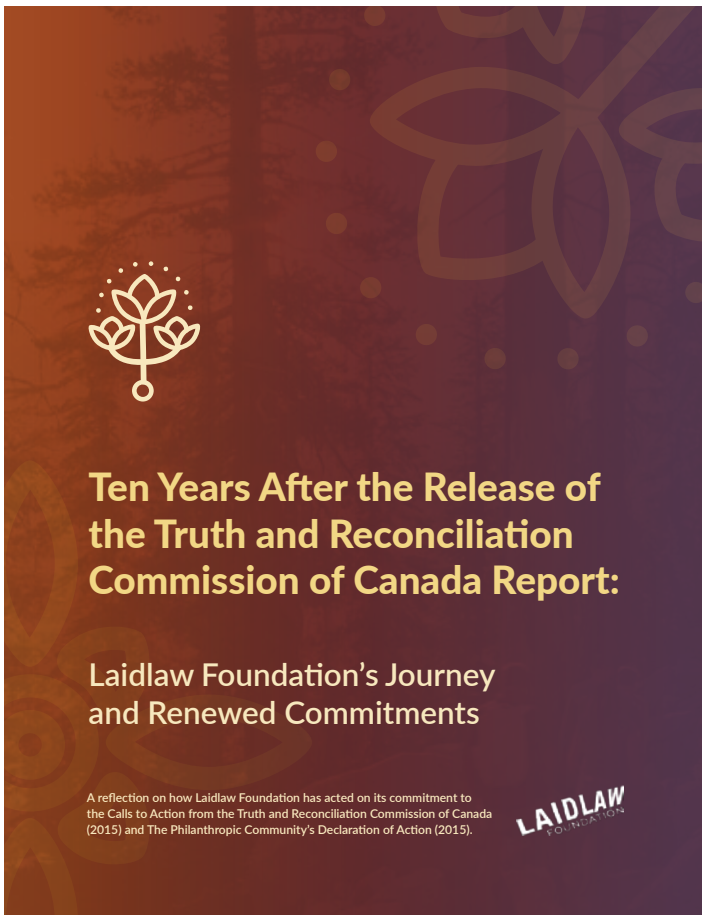
ORGANIZATION NAME	AMOUNT
Positive Change Toronto Initiative	\$100,000
Scadding Court Community Centre (SCCC)	\$100,000
Platform (Young Women's Leadership Network)	\$100,000
Direct Your Life Organization	\$100,000
Revitalized Reintegration Services	\$100,000
Anab Youth Next Generation	\$100,000
Feathers of Hope	\$100,000
Active Newcomer Youth Ottawa (ANYO)	\$100,000
Success Beyond Limits (SBL)	\$100,000
Sentencing and Parole Project (SPP)	\$100,000

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF SIGNING THE PHILANTHROPIC DECLARATION OF ACTION

2025 marked 10 years since Laidlaw Foundation signed the Philanthropic Declaration of Action, a commitment for philanthropic organizations to use their resources to advance reconciliation.

The document called on organizations to confront Canada's colonial legacy and the roles they might have played in perpetuating harm towards Indigenous people and land. To honour, renew and reflect on our commitments, we released a report: *Ten Years After the Release of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Report: Laidlaw Foundation's Journey*

and Renewed Commitments. The report was an exercise of acknowledging the origins of our wealth, reckoning with historical harms caused toward Indigenous communities, and recommitting to continued transformation. This report was an exercise of learning and an opportunity to share insights gained from our reflections.



Pictured: Donovan Gordon Tootoo



Pictured: Aldeli Albán Reyna, Caceila Trahan, Carissa Coe, Benjamin Mitsuk, Janine Manning, Kris Archie

\$264,597

FAMILY, BOARD, STAFF FUND

FAMILY, BOARD, STAFF FUND - \$264,597	
ORGANIZATION NAME	AMOUNT
After Sc-Kool (A.S.K.) summer camp	\$5,000
Alliston & District Humane Society	\$2,500
Anishnabeg Outreach	\$5,000
ASE Community Foundation For Black Canadians with Disabilities	\$2,500
Autism Dog Services Inc.	\$10,000
Brigs Youth Sail Training	\$25,500
Camp BUCKO	\$2,500
Camp Winston Foundation	\$10,000
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)	\$2,500
Central Tech Community Swim	\$2,500
Chippewas of Nawash Band	\$10,000
Christie Lake Kids	\$30,000
Donovan Gordon Tootoo	\$2,000
Freedom Flotilla Coalition - Canada boat to Gaza	\$5,000
Georgina Community Food Pantry	\$3,000
Greenbelt Foundation	\$5,000
KCHC Pathways to Education	\$5,000
My Sister's Place (Alliston Women's Shelter)	\$2,500
Nature Conservancy of Canada	\$5,000
Ottawa International Writers Festival	\$10,000
Our Town Food Bank (Tottenham Food Bank)	\$2,500
Partners In Mission Food Bank	\$40,000

FAMILY, BOARD, STAFF FUND - \$264,597	
ORGANIZATION NAME	AMOUNT
pflag Canada	\$2,500
Rainbow Railroad	\$5,000
Samara Centre for Democracy	\$2,500
StepStones for Youth	\$7,500
The ClearWater Futures Foundation	\$4,000
The Glenn Gould School (The Royal Conservatory of Music)	\$10,000
Toronto Foundation	\$10,000
Toronto Indigenous Harm Reduction	\$13,000
Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)	\$2,500
Wahkohtowin Development GP Inc.	\$1,500
Wet'suwet'en Yintah Defence Legal Funds	\$8,000
Yamnuska Wolfdog Sanctuary	\$2,500

\$6,500

BOARD RECOGNITION FUND

BOARD RECOGNITION FUND - \$6,500	
ORGANIZATION NAME	AMOUNT
Youth Diversion - in honour of the Honourable George Thomson	\$2,000
Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation - in memory of Jeff Smith	\$2,000
Christie Lake Kids - in memory of Jamie Laidlaw	\$2,500

THE NATHAN GILBERT YOUTH INNOVATION FELLOW 2025: EVELYN AMPONSAH

The Nathan Gilbert Youth Innovation Fellowship was established in 2014 to honour the late Nathan Gilbert's 30-plus-year legacy of championing youth. Every year, one or two young people are selected to undertake a one-year self-directed initiative exploring or addressing issues youth in Ontario face in, or at the intersection of, the education, child welfare, criminal, and environmental justice sectors. It is in this spirit that the 2025-2026 Fellow, Evelyn Amponsah, is conducting a longitudinal study exploring the impacts of energy poverty on Black youth's education outcomes.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This project explores how energy poverty (limited access to heating, cooling and electricity) affects the learning experiences of Black youth in low-income communities. Using a community-based approach, this research aims to capture the lived experiences of students to understand how school and housing conditions, changes in temperature and access to energy shape their ability to focus, engage and succeed in school. It also explores how families and the broader community respond to these challenges and identifies opportunities for community-driven solutions and change.

This first phase of the project involved conducting a literature review to explore existing research on energy poverty, education disparities and environmental justice; setting up a Community Advisory Board; and engaging elementary students and their families to use a journaling tool to capture ways the weather and other environmental factors influence focus, mood and overall learning, both at school and at home.

WHY IT MATTERS

This project matters because learning is shaped by the environment. Students may not be able to fully focus or perform well when their environments are too hot, or too cold, or feel uncomfortable. Many researchers often treat energy poverty as a

technical or cost issue, but it has real impacts on education, wellbeing and opportunity, making it a critical barrier that deserves further exploration.

Further, systemic barriers in housing and education mean that Black youth in low-income communities may face greater challenges in accessing supportive learning environments. As extreme temperatures increase, these challenges will become more frequent and severe, further widening inequities.

SOME EARLY INSIGHTS

Multiple snowstorms and fluctuating temperatures in classrooms have impacted focus and energy. Majority of students reported feeling tired, and struggling with concentration and motivation.

Learning is affected by discomfort, as students reported pain in hands, fatigue, and irritability in class. They are unable to make decisions on when to open the door, turn on the heater, etc.

While home felt most comfortable, some reported experiences of power outages during snowstorms making them unable to access wifi, proper lighting and heat.

Students also have solutions. Ideas included heating packs, better HVAC systems, more choice in going outdoor, and heating stations at bus stops to support their commute.

IN MEMORIAM NATHAN GILBERT (1952–2025)



In 1982, Nick Laidlaw hired 30-year-old Nathan Gilbert, a graduate of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Social Work, as Laidlaw Foundation's Executive Director. Nick and Nathan developed a professional partnership into a caring friendship until Nick's death in 1990. Over 31 years with Laidlaw, Nathan continued Nick's pioneering work in transforming this private family foundation into a public interest one.

Nathan was instrumental in the development and administration of many programs for which the Foundation became well known and respected. In the performing arts field, the Foundation was instrumental in the creation of a canon of new works that reflected Canadians to themselves, and Nathan was a fixture in theatres throughout the city and the province seeing much of the work that was funded over a period of 25 years. Children at risk were always a preoccupation for the Foundation and personally for Nathan, who had huge compassion for children in care and was concerned about the environmental impacts on children's health. Over the years, he developed extensive national and regional networks in the policy, research and practice fields of the Foundation's focus areas.

Nathan oversaw many educational initiatives during his tenure and was also committed to incubating projects that shared Foundation interests and values such as the Sustainability Network and ArtReach Toronto.

In 1999, to mark the Foundation's 50th anniversary, Nathan co-edited *Making Change: Fifty Years of the Laidlaw Foundation* (ECW Press: 2001), a record of the Foundation's work and the impact it has had on social, cultural and environmental causes. It was also a testament to Nathan's institutional memory, a trait that many of his colleagues admired in him.

During his last seven years, he led the Foundation to focus its resources on building the capacities of racially diverse young people through youth engagement in community leadership in civic affairs and institutional governance.

Nathan never wavered from his core values of diversity, transparency, respect, intergenerational reciprocity and inclusion. He was a passionate advocate for young people and their role in society as contributors and change-makers. His legacy and influence will continue to be present at Laidlaw through The Nathan Gilbert Youth Innovation Fellowship, a grant program that engages young people in policy and systems change.

Laidlaw Foundation is forever indebted to Nathan for his vision, dedication and leadership. Laidlaw has benefited from his wisdom and unshakable faith in justice. We continue to build on the strong foundation he laid out for us and affirm our commitment to his vision, and we will celebrate his legacy. Laidlaw's Board, Members, and staff extend deepest condolences to Nathan's wife Myrna, his children Amy, Annie, Joshua, and Jonathan, and his family and friends.

IN MEMORIAM JEFFERY LAIDLAW SMITH (1946–2025)



Jeffery was the second-born grandchild and second-born grandson of Robert, Robert, one of the founders of the Foundation, and Julia Laidlaw. He was named in honour of his uncle, Jeffery Cayley Laidlaw, who was killed in action on January 31, 1944, during the Second World War.

Throughout his life, Jeffery embraced opportunities for family members to contribute to the Foundation's work. He first served on an early iteration of the Family Committee and later completed a full term on the Board. During his time on the Family Committee, he was a driving force behind what was then a significant step forward for both the Committee and the Foundation: a proactive, multi-year partnership with the Town of Georgina to develop the Georgina Community Resource Centre. The Centre became the first multi-service community hub in York Region and reflected Jeffery's belief in practical, community-rooted philanthropy.

When the Foundation concluded the Family Committee model and created three dedicated

Laidlaw family seats on the Board, Jeffery was first elected to one of those positions in 1992. Among his many contributions, he was especially valued for his unwavering insistence that the Board always return to the simple, grounded question of "why." That question often helped focus—and at times refocus—Board deliberations. He was never reluctant to speak candidly, ask pointed questions, or challenge the Executive Director and more experienced Board members when he felt it was needed.

A beloved husband of the late Shirley (2021), Jeffery is survived by his three sons, Jeff Jr. (Grace), Lyon, and Rob (Pauline); his six grandchildren, Charlie Jane, Holden, River, Hero, Katie, and Sarah; and his brother, Bob.

IN MEMORIAM JAMES (JAMIE) LAIDLAW (1949–2025)



For nearly 50 years, Jamie Laidlaw, son of Dr. Robert Gordon Nicholas Laidlaw, one of the founders of the Laidlaw Foundation, contributed to the Foundation in many meaningful ways. A former member of the Board, he helped lead the development of the Family Committee and remained deeply committed to engaging the Laidlaw family in philanthropy and the Foundation's work. Over more than three decades, he served multiple terms on the Board and went on to establish its first Environmental Committee—well before environmental funding became commonplace—reflecting his enduring passion for the environment, history, and community wellbeing.

Jamie was a captivating storyteller, able to recall facts with astonishing precision and weave humour, suspense, and wonder into every tale. He approached each conversation as a small act of philosophy, turning simple moments into thoughtful reflections. His belief that small, well-placed acts of kindness could spark meaningful change shaped a lifetime of quiet, steady, and remarkably effective philanthropy, inspiring non-profits and charities across the country. His leadership extended widely through board roles with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network, the Ontario Nature Trust Alliance, the Rideau Waterway Land Trust, and the Vancouver Community Foundation's Environmental Advisory Board. His dedication to heritage preservation was later recognized with the Ontario Historical Society's Cruikshank Gold Medal for exceptional service.

In recent years, two initiatives held a special place in Jamie's heart: the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force and Christie Lake Kids. The Task Force's collaborative and compassionate approach to addressing poverty reflected his belief that communities are strongest when they support the most vulnerable without judgment. Christie Lake Kids spoke to his conviction that every child deserves joy, time in nature, and opportunities for creativity—experiences that shape how young people see the world.

We are deeply grateful for Jamie's lifelong dedication and the lasting impact he leaves behind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to recognize the many contributors to this report, including Kinmond Smith (Designer), Amber Waboose (Artist, Cover Art), Alexis Riley (Artist), Grace Swain (Artist) and Dimitra Chronopoulos (Writer and Editor).

 WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/COMPANY/LAIDLAW-FOUNDATION

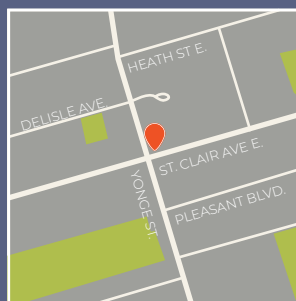
 @LAIDLAWFOUNDATION

 @LAIDLAWFDN

 LAIDLAW_FOUNDATION AND LAIDLAW.IYCFF

 WWW.LAIDLAWFDN.ORG

LAIDLAW
FOUNDATION



2 ST. CLAIR AVENUE EAST • SUITE 300 •
TORONTO, ON M4T 2T5 • 416-964-3614