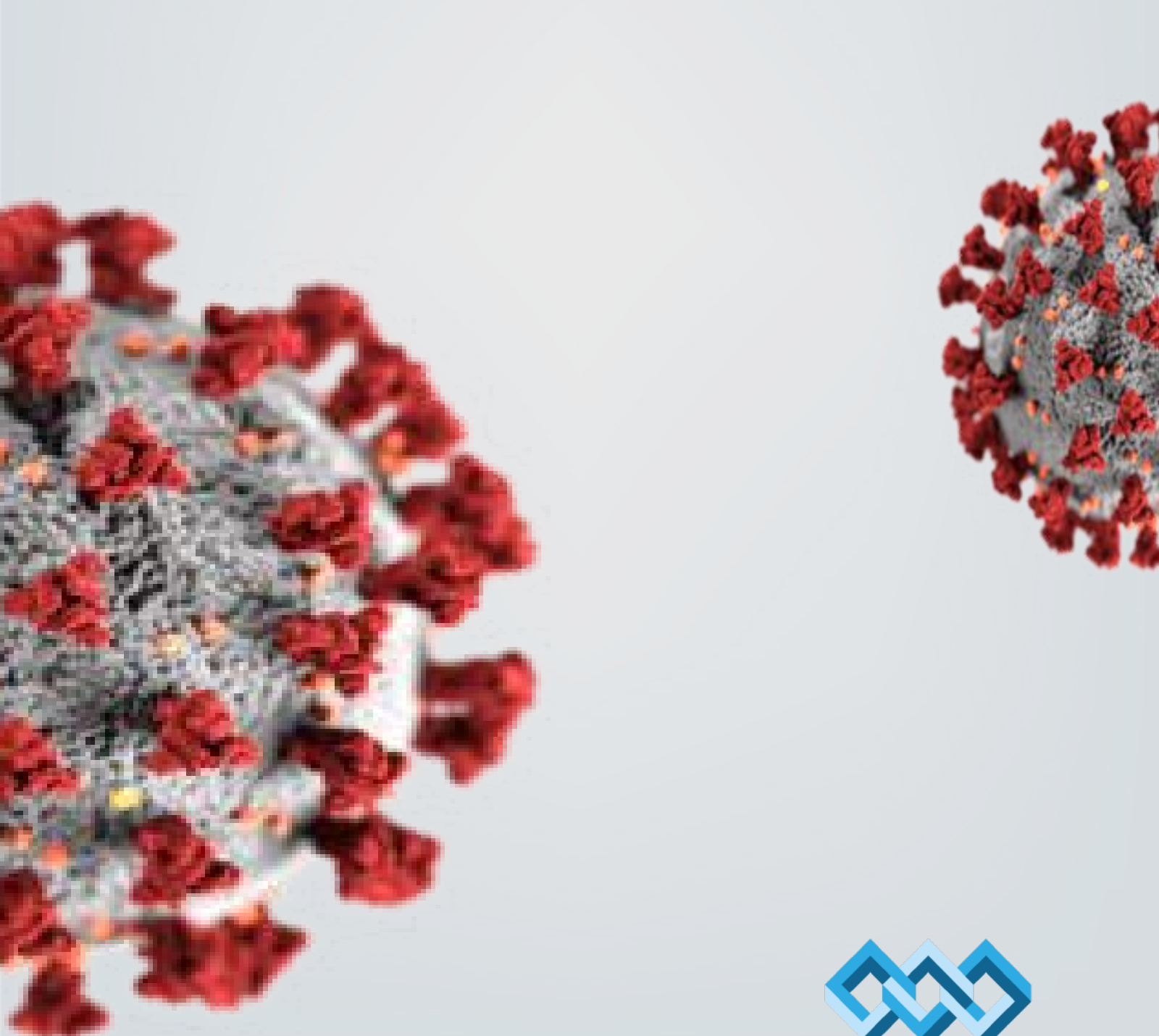


L'Année PhiLanthropique

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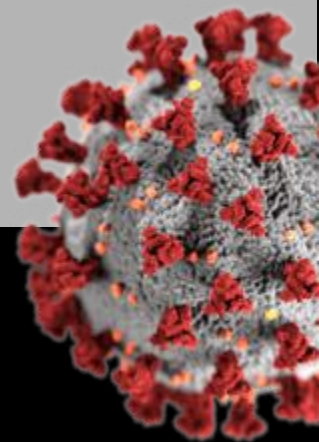
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PhiLab

Réseau Canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie
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ENTREVUE | INTERVIEW



Vous trouverez dans ce chapitre six entrevues d'étudiants-es du PhiLab.

In this chapter you will find six interviews by some of our students.



ENTREVUE | INTERVIEW

Diane Roussin, Indigenous UWinnipeg



Par | By:
Andrea Kosovac Sykes
Coordinator of PhiLab Ontario

Andrea Kosovac Sykes is currently the Ontario Hub Coordinator, under the supervision of Manuel Litalien and François Brouard. She has a Bachelor of Commerce from Carleton University, and is currently pursuing her Masters of Science in Management at Carleton University. As part of her Masters, her research is looking at the relationship between hospitals and hospital foundation(s) with her supervisor François Brouard.

Diane Roussin is currently the Project Director of the Winnipeg Boldness Project, an ambitious social innovation initiative seeking to create large-scale systems change for children and families in the Point Douglas neighbourhood. She has worked tirelessly, primarily in Winnipeg's inner city, for initiatives that promote Indigenous People's values and ways of knowing and being. She has led many projects and organizations including as Executive Director of the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, as Co-Director of the Community Education Development Association, and as Coordinator of The Centennial Neighbourhood Project.

“*The longer duration of COVID-19 is making the ability to get through emergency response effectively more challenging.*”

Andra Kosovac Sykes (AKS): Can you tell me about yourself and how you got involved with *The Winnipeg Boldness Project*.

Diane Roussin (DR): I'm a first nation's woman and I have been living in Winnipeg since the 90's, when I came for school. When the time came to do my practicum, I knew I wanted an indigenous public policy placement. This was when I was first introduced to many different indigenous organizations and leaders; the female indigenous leaders had the greatest impact on my life. This was how I first got involved in the inner city and have continued to be involved since. It was the vibrant and cutting edge work happening within the urban indigenous community that motivated me to stay in the city. I felt embraced by the urban indigenous community and it embodied what I stand for. The *Winnipeg Boldness Project*^[1] is now in its seventh year and is a continuation of my previous work.

From the beginning the stakeholders of *The Boldness Project*, set out to create a social lab that revolved around questions of early indigenous childhood. As I had been working mainly with indigenous organizations that served indigenous families, I had a specific set of skills and knowledge that the *Winnipeg Boldness Project* was looking for.

AKS: How did you first get engaged with initiatives promoting indigenous people's values and ways of being?

DR: As an indigenous person in a mainstream schooling system, I always knew my day-to-day reality was different from my educational experience. For instance, school was mainstream and centred around different values and approaches from those I was raised with. As a result, I have always known and felt the difference, throughout my years in mainstream education. When I entered the inner city, I witnessed how indigenous people were working and their "professions", and realized that it aligned more with my values and how I was raised. The way indigenous people were delivering services and working proved to me that these were the people I wanted to work for and with.

AKS: Were there any historical lessons from previous virus outbreaks (H1N1, swine flu outbreaks) that were put into effect for Covid-19?

DR: Previously, virus outbreaks have highlighted how indigenous people are impacted differently. As a society as a whole, it feels we didn't learn from those lessons. COVID-19 has hit the globe more extensively than any other virus. As a result, more people are feeling the impacts that previously only indigenous people had felt most acutely. More people can relate and understand as now they have experienced it themselves. For example, the idea of everyone having to line-up for all services. People who are privileged in comparison to those of lesser economic means are not used to having to line-up for basic services such as food. There is also the issue of scarcity, which people of privilege don't encounter often, but if you are living in poverty, it is quite normal. Feeling like you aren't able to get what you need leads to panic buying and a lack of generosity. While indigenous people have learned a few lessons, in reality, we still don't have the resources to deal with outbreaks like we are dealing with currently.

AKS: Is there an indigenous holistic approach to understanding and fighting the pandemic?

The *Winnipeg Boldness Project* is a platform centred on indigenous wisdom. While there are many principles and knowledge frameworks, one core concept is relationships. It is through relationships that many values and principles align such as reciprocity and interconnectedness. While the rest of society is striving toward recovery mode, we are still in emergency response mode. To be able to respond effectively and in an equitable way, it all comes down to building good relationships. This allows you to better know the needs of your community, and redirect resources where needed, such as food and hygiene products. Another principle is interconnectedness; when we look at the context prior to COVID-19, it was considered impossible to hit targets such as reducing GHG emissions. However, we have now been forced into a new lifestyle and certain things are thriving. While there have been negative impacts on the economy due to the shutdown, there have been positive aspects such as hitting those same environmental targets. We never thought we could do something to the economy that would have a good impact on the earth, which demonstrates how interconnected we are. As a *Skownan*^[2], we have medicine wheel teachings; the elders teach us life phases with the circle. The phase of dependence is when we are young, early adulthood is the phase of independence and then, as we get older, the goal is interdependence. Western society focuses more on independence, the need to not rely on anyone, and I feel our planet has suffered because of it.



AKS: How do you see the organizations and projects you are working with adapt in the midst of the current pandemic?

DR: Our community, specifically talking about the inner city in neighbourhoods that are usually economically challenged, is good at responding to emergencies. When there is a suicide, shooting or overdose, we are able to mobilize quickly. This has taught us how to deal with trauma, making us strong and more resilient. This is helping us manage the current emergency response. However, emergency response is more for short term situations, while I think the longer duration of COVID-19 is making the ability to get through emergency response effectively more challenging.

AKS: How difficult is it to shift your work on-line, and practice social/physical distancing?

DR: Most of the Winnipeg Boldness Project partners have been working immensely hard. Their proactive work has shifted towards getting food and emergency supplies into the community. Organizations are having to spend their program budgets and use the money to purchase groceries and find ways to get food to communities. Our partners don't have a lot of time for meetings, but they will make time if they feel the meeting will help in serving the community. Moving to an online system has a long list of challenges because of certain economic circumstances. In the community, there are families without the hardware, without access to Wi-Fi, or to enough screens per household. People don't have the luxury of having quiet spaces to work in. During meetings with the parents you have the whole family interacting. People are pretty exhausted from all the demands. Our community doesn't have easy access to credit cards, people still have to go outside. There is no social distancing when using buses or taxis when they buy their supplies. There are also many families with fixed incomes, who tend to load up on supplies when they receive their monthly cheque but aren't able to have access to them as they are all out. Parents are expressing their fear and anxiety about going outside as there isn't a lot of space to move around in the inner city. Because of the nature of their work, many people still have to go in every day.

AKS: Are the measures adopted by the government harder to implement due to cultural differences (community-oriented versus a more individual model)?

DR: I'm in Manitoba, and our provincial government is taking a very different approach than the federal government's. Federally, we have a government that is saying "we are here for you" and encouraging Canadians to apply for various emergency programs. On the other hand, our province has taken the austerity approach and identified who the essential and non-essential workers are. This has generated fear about masses of people being laid off, as universities are being asked to cut back by 30%^[3] and public services are reducing their workweek to two days. Their reasoning is that we all need to take a hit in order to redirect more resources to healthcare services. The federal programs have been fairly responsive and easy to access. However, our provincial government hasn't announced any measures^[4]. This has made many organizations worried about their regular program fund being cut. The irony is that these same organizations are spending more money, as they are using program budgets for staffing.

AKS: Are there any measures or capacity-building you think organizations will be adopting as a result of the pandemic?

DR: Outreach has been more of a focus than it has been in the past, we are really exercising our outreach muscles. Most of our places have been creating gathering spaces with all the amenities including telephones, washers and dryers. People are phoning in as a way to engage in social interaction. With the nicer weather, more people are hanging around the centres outside, forcing staff to enforce certain rules. I also think mental health will be at the front and centre.

AKS: Are there any indigenous gender-specific approaches to health during these challenging times?

DR: While there are Indigenous-specific approaches, I don't know if they would be considered gender-specific. Western society is set up for resourcing and programming that separates gender and family. Indigenous approaches are more holistic and

family-oriented. Indigenous culture is not worried about the titles and is more focused on relationships.

This confuses our system when we try to understand who qualifies for certain resources. We do have a lot of roles for women and roles for men that come through in ceremony. There is a lot of healing that happens in ceremonies, that would fall under mental health approaches.

AKS: Have you witnessed new crises emerge as a result of self-isolation and quarantine?

DR: While I listen to various public officials and premiers talk, I don't hear them talking about the things I hear families talking about. I'm not talking about all families but mostly inner-city families with economic challenges. They are talking about the struggles of being at home with the kids all day. This includes trying to understand their children's schooling and providing food all day, which usually would have been covered in part by other programs. There is also uncertainty about the long term. As summer approaches, they wonder if there will still be summer camps. It is known that the more isolation there is, the worse it gets for these families.

AKS: Have you had to lay off staff as a result of the pandemic?

DR: No, at The Winnipeg Boldness Program we haven't had to lay off any staff as we are a small team. However, I have heard from other community organizations that they have had to lay off staff due to budget cuts and change job titles. The staff are also fearful of contracting COVID-19 or getting our older population sick, meaning they are hesitant to come in to work.

AKS: How do you think the announced *Emergency Community Support Fund*[5] in partnership with *Community Foundations of Canada*[6], *Red Cross Canada* and *United-Way Centraide Canada*[7] will impact charities and non-profits and what other support would you like to see?

DR: It was great to see the announcement as I personally feel foundations have the most ability to be very responsive. There isn't the same level of bureaucracy that you see with the government. The philanthropic world has the ability to allow resources to flow in a way that the community can be in charge

With the *Winnipeg Boldness Project*, we get a big portion of our money from philanthropy, and the way we are set up is emergent and iterative. We were able to ask our community organizations what they needed and how we could help. By sitting on the board of the *Winnipeg Community Foundation*[8] I have seen them redirect resources to the community under the COVID-19 response banner and provide money for what is needed. This is different from having a granting program and having to fulfill certain criteria when applying.

AKS: Do you see any specific impacts of COVID-19 on the indigenous community and the province of Manitoba?

DR: I think it just emphasizes the economic inequalities and the limited access to supplies, technology and protective equipment. All the social distancing guidelines are difficult to follow as our community isn't as properly equipped in comparison to mainstream society.

AKS: Have you consulted other partners in different provinces? Internationally?

DR: Through *The Winnipeg Boldness Project* and my interest in the social innovation world, I have built great connections. I have been able to have access to the top emergency response people in the world. This has given me the privilege of participating in webinars in which I have learned tips and techniques to help with *The Winnipeg Boldness Project*.

AKS: Did any long-term goals for either the Winnipeg Boldness Project or any other projects change due to the current situation?

DR: Not yet, we are a collaborative platform and we are just starting to learn the online tools necessary to collaborate. Much of our work was face-to-face and interactive, as a result there is a lot of uncertainty if we will be able to shift to an online mode. A lot of our work was cross-sectoral, because of the emergency response, we haven't done a lot of cross-sectoral work lately. There is a lot of sensitivity to the current situation and not getting into business as usual. *The Winnipeg Boldness Project* is a year to year endeavour, if the pandemic goes on for a year we don't know if we will be able to continue making progress. ■

References

- [1] <https://www.winnipegboldness.ca/>
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Image : Joshua Reddekopp