



L'ARCHE®
saskatoon

www.larchesaskatoon.org

REFLECTION FROM THE COMMUNITY LEADER

by Wyndham Thiessen

Bridges

December 2014



Maurice feeds chickadees at our retreat at St. Peter's Abbey

L'Arche, like any organization, has its own culture: its own particular language, its own way of seeing things, its own way of interpreting experiences. Being immersed in the culture of L'Arche, as I have been for 10 years now, can make it difficult to see and appreciate certain aspects of our life together. So I always enjoy hearing people from outside the culture of L'Arche relate their own impressions and understanding of what life in L'Arche communities is about. Sometimes their descriptions highlight truths that I had failed to notice or to appreciate fully.

I was reminded recently of an Ian Brown article that appeared seven years ago in *The Globe and Mail*, in which he talks about life with his son Walker, who was born with significant disabilities. At the end of the article, Brown

talks about Jean Vanier and L'Arche. Here is how Brown—someone from outside of the culture of L'Arche—describes his understanding of Jean's vision: "Mr. Vanier is a radical. Instead of integrating the handicapped into the normal world, he calls for the able-bodied to be integrated into the world of the handicapped, to live among them—because that way, we will learn more. The more we meet the handicapped on their own ground, rather than our own, Mr. Vanier says, the more we evolve. . . . 'By becoming close to disabled people and entering an authentic relationship with them, they transform us. They help us to move from the personal desire for success and power to a desire to be with those who are weak and help them to be just as they are, knowing that we receive as much or even more than we give.'"

Let me start by saying that I don't think Brown gets it exactly right. He suggests that Jean doesn't support integration or inclusion as this is commonly understood—but, of course, he does. But when I read this I realized that Jean is advocating for an alternative way of working towards integration and inclusion. Jean often draws our attention to the gaps that exist between people, including gaps between people with and without disabilities. There are two ways we can approach the task of closing these gaps, of drawing near to one another. One approach is to support people with disabilities to find their place in the so-called "normal" world—the world of success, competition, and power. But this approach allows us, and the "normal" world, to remain substantially unchanged.

(continued on page 3)

MEET CODY STACK



Cody Stack was born in Saskatoon and graduated from Clavet High School. Besides his stepmom and dad, he has an older brother and three younger sisters. Cody loves to spend time with his dad and his grandma—who really light up his life! For the past six years, Cody has lived at Christopher House, the L’Arche home in Saskatoon. When asked about living at Christopher House he said: “I love this place and all those who live with me!”

Two days a week Cody works at Golding’s, the new Independent Grocer on Herold Road in Saskatoon. He loves his job and all the others who work with him know and appreciate him too. On other weekdays, Cody participates in a workshop program offered by L’Arche Saskatoon, where he and the others do such things as weaving, cooking, making crafts, going on field trips and helping others.

Cody really enjoys leisure activities. He is a member of a Monday Night Drama group and has acted in a number of videos that he helped to plan. Cody often organizes an “Improv Night” at Christopher House. He also likes going to movies with his friends. Most recently, Cody had a holiday trip to Disney World with his father, his brother and two aunts. Wherever Cody walks, the sun shines—and maybe that is why he recently chose to have his room painted a bright yellow!



Laura, Lindsay and Andrea get into the swing of things

L’ARCHE IDENTITY STATEMENT

We are people with and without intellectual disabilities, sharing life in communities belonging to an international federation.

Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together.

We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognise our need of one another.

(continued from page 1)

The other approach is to “meet the handicapped on their own ground,” opening ourselves to change, loosening our tight grip on the “normal” world’s values of success, competition, and power—since these values are what often leave people with disabilities on the margins.

These two approaches are not mutually exclusive: we can and should work at both. But what Brown helped me to see is that L’Arche announces the importance of this second approach to integration and inclusion. We *all* need to change. This is why L’Arche emphasizes the necessity of “mutually transforming relationships.” This is why L’Arche Canada’s vision is that of “Transforming society by transforming lives”: society will change for the better as we *all* allow ourselves to be transformed.

Thank you for your support of this vision! Blessings to you and those you love this Advent season.

2014 COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

- Our “Cakes in the City” fundraiser with Cheshire homes was a great success. We had beautiful cakes made by eight chefs from across the city, six corporate sponsors, and 230 people attending. It was so much fun, we’re doing it again: January 27, 4 to 8 pm at the Farmer’s Market—see you there!
- We have started implementing the new L’Arche Canada Servant Leadership program. This initiative is helping all community members to live the Identity and Mission more deeply and intentionally.
- We welcomed two new people to the board, Derek Meates and Sherry Richert, bringing our total number of board members to nine.
- Our workshop group continues to meet on Mondays and Tuesdays, living out their mission of “Making friends, making art, and making peace” in different and creative ways. Our new volunteer, Laine Walker, has been teaching the members how to weave on a loom. In May, we were very pleased to welcome a new workshop leader, Krista Loewen.
- We held our retreat day on July 30 at Saint Peter’s Abbey in Muenster.
- To celebrate the 50th anniversary of L’Arche, we held a lunch and cruise on a riverboat, followed by a prayer service at Saint John’s Anglican Cathedral.
- During our community holidays in July we were joined by a pair from L’Arche Lethbridge and a group from L’Arche Winnipeg. Good fun!
- Conversations with the Ministry about our second home continue—we’ll keep you posted as things develop. We are also discussing the possibility of securing funding for our workshop so that we can welcome more participants (at present, this initiative receives no Ministry funding).



Celebrating the 50th anniversary of L'Arche on the Prairie Lily

WAYS TO BECOME INVOLVED IN L'ARCHE SASKATOON

- Attend a Friends of L'Arche Gathering (once a month).
- Come to a Prayer Night (Wednesday evenings).
- Become a prayer partner for L'Arche Saskatoon.
- Volunteer to work on a L'Arche Committee: Gatherings, Communications, Newsletter, House and Garden, Development and Fundraising, Special Events Planning (coffeehouse, garage sale).
- Assist with ongoing financial support for the special programs of L'Arche. Many thanks, if you have already donated -- and please continue to keep L'Arche Saskatoon on your list of worthy charities to support.
- Donate goods or services.
- Learn more about Jean Vanier and L'Arche around the world by reading books by and about Jean Vanier, Henri Nouwen, Sue Mosteller and others.
- Check out: L'Arche Canada: www.larche.ca; L'Arche International: www.larche.org; L'Arche Saskatoon: www.larchesaskatoon.org.
- Add your e-mail address to our Friends of L'Arche e-mail list to receive notices of events and copies of the newsletter by e-mail. (Your e-mail information is only for the use of L'Arche Saskatoon and will not be shared with anyone else.) Send your request to: wthiessen@larchesaskatoon.org.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE FINANCIALLY

By cheque to:

L'Arche Saskatoon
c/o Wyndham Thiessen
P.O. Box 23006
Saskatoon, SK S7J 5H3

- You will receive a charitable receipt for income tax purposes. Be sure to include your full name and mailing address so we can prepare the receipt.

For more information or to be removed from our newsletter mailing list, please send a message to Wyndham Thiessen, Community Leader, at: wthiessen@larchesaskatoon.org or by phone at (306) 262-7243.

ABOUT L'ARCHE SASKATOON COMMUNITY

L'Arche Saskatoon is one of 29 L'Arche communities across Canada. At the present time we have one home, Christopher House, and an extended community called Friends of L'Arche, which has a monthly Gathering. Ecumenical prayer nights are held weekly at Christopher House, and our Collective Kitchen members meet one Sunday a month. In these and other settings, we are working to build community and strengthen friendships as we live, work, play and pray together.

ABOUT L'ARCHE SASKATOON INC.

- We are a non-profit organization and a registered charity (#86345-4872 RR0001), able to provide charitable receipts for tax purposes.
- We have an Executive Director/Community Leader (Wyndham Thiessen) and a volunteer board of directors.
- We receive core funding support from the Government of Saskatchewan for the operation of Christopher House and we rely on donations from individuals and groups to cover additional expenses and special programs.
- Financial contributions are received with gratitude and used with great care to support our mission and our work.