



Willow Springs Creative Centre

Board Orientation Package

2022

Willow Springs Creative Centre is a progressive, inclusive, non-profit housing several social purpose enterprises. We believe in the transformative power creative expression can have in people's lives. The "inside the lines" method can stifle. Layer on the additional barriers of disability, societal alienation and lack of resources and it becomes very difficult for people to break free and gain access to their creative passion. Willow Springs Creative Centre connects artists, therapeutic gardeners, bakers & cooks with people of all ages and circumstances to engage in meaningful creative experiences.

We believe in working collaboratively. We provide learning & employment training opportunities in art, therapeutic gardening & food service. We enable people of Northwestern Ontario to express themselves creatively and we support organizations, groups & institutions to incorporate art making, food activities and therapeutic gardening into their programming.

Our mission is to promote growth through creative expression and community development

Our objectives are to:

- Encourage, inspire and support art, gardening & food education
- Use art, creativity and gardening as an avenue to healing
- Commit to life-long education and personal growth
- Foster openness and accessibility within our programming
- Be an active partner in community development

Art is a powerful weapon that can be used against many enemies: lack of communication, solitude, depression and confusion. Art can be used as a creative approach to deal with issues such as control, loss, forgiveness, self-esteem, reality orientation and socialization. It can help reach therapeutic goals for persons of all ages and abilities.

Diane Fausek-Steinbach



Willow Springs Creative Centre

began in 2001 when four artisans began an artisan gift store & studio offering creative programs to those seeking broad outcomes from the creative process i.e. building artistic and social skills. In order to realize the full potential of the venture, a non-profit organization was formed in June 2006. Most organizations in our area that could benefit from art, therapeutic gardening & food programming do not have in-house programs. Willow Springs Creative Centre bridges this gap by providing programming & training at our rural Centre as well as in a mobile format.

An early partnership with George Jeffrey Children's Centre demonstrated the value of art and gardening programming for children with physical and cognitive disabilities.

Conceptualization, attention, focus, hand-eye coordination and group skills were developed along with the artistic and horticultural skills. The Children's Centre Thunder Bay engaged their First Nations youth program in a willow chair construction project. The process of venturing into the woods to select and cut branches and use them to build beautiful, functional furniture was about much more than construction techniques. It became an opportunity to be in nature, discover one's own hidden artistic talents, work as a team, build self-esteem and experience a sense of accomplishment.

Growing from those initial experiences, WSCC now provides art, therapeutic gardening & food programming and training year round. We work in long term care facilities and retirement homes, correctional facilities, treatment centres, group homes, schools and more. Our Soup & Bread Extravaganza, Pizza & Salad program, Willow Springs Market & Lappe Ski Centre Nordic Cafe are exciting local food related social purpose enterprises providing employment skills training for adults with disabilities. WSCC has worked with numerous community partners (Autism Ontario, CNIB, March of Dimes, Options NW, Roots to Harvest, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Southbridge Lakehead)

We draw on an exceptional board of directors, our Food, Gardening and Art Working Groups, a roster of talented artists, gardeners & bakers/cooks and committed volunteers to do this vital work. We invite you to join us.



Original 4 Artisans: Kathy, Liisa, Judi & Lea

Willow Springs Creative Centre Core Artists/Art Educators

Willow Springs Creative Centre evolved from the work of four artisans, Lea Hayes, Kathy Toivonen, Liisa Mikkola and Judi Vinni, who started on a journey of artistic commerce that mushroomed into offering creative programs to individuals and organizations. At present, Judi Vinni is the Coordinator of WSCC, Lea Hayes is the owner of Sprouts Baby Apparel, an active grandma and farmer. Liisa Mikkola is a WSCC Board Member & the past Executive Director of the Thunder Bay John Howard Society. Kathy Toivonen is a published author, a soon to be grandma and Canada Post mail carrier.

WSCC has a roster of trained professional artists, therapeutic gardeners and cooks and bakers who deliver our programming based on the best matches between our participants, the goals of each program, and the facilitators' expertise and ability to effectively share their skills. In selecting facilitators for our programming, we value both artistic/gardening/food skills and inclusive group facilitation and support skills. Training opportunities for program facilitators are provided through active mentoring by sending two facilitators to each class we offer, whenever possible. Artists have taken part in art classes and training sessions such as York University & OAC's Arts Education Certificate, Red Path Life Skills Certification, our Creative Life Skills Training, Inclusiveness and Accessibility training with the City of Thunder Bay and Autism Ontario and more.

*Artwork
created by a
youth at the
Justice
Ronald Lester
Youth Centre*





Judi Vinni
WSCC
Coordinator

Judi contributes incredible energy and brings a wealth of coordination experience to WSCC. As Co-owner of the Willow Springs Artisan Gift Store & Studio (2001-2006) she helped lead the transition into Willow Springs Creative Centre. Her coordination skills have been developed through a range of leadership experiences with the First Nations Reintegration Program (2005), Women in Trades and Technology Program & Network (1984-1995), Northwestern Ontario Women's Health Information Network (1984-1993) as well as volunteer coordination activities with Lappe Nordic Ski Club & Jackrabbit Program (1996-2011), Conquer the Dog Triathlon (1998 to 2018), Gorham & Ware Community School (1996 to present) and numerous other organizations. Her business experience comes from running a successful automotive shop with her husband for 20 years and a small willow furniture business, Willow Witches of Ware with Liisa Mikkola.

For Judi, creating is about empowerment. She loves facilitating engagement in the creative process. Judi believes we must embrace the **art of living**. In her art she utilizes natural materials, especially willow, to produce functional, yet beautiful pieces. She has a passion for developing innovative, meaningful programs and projects. She continues to work towards her certification as a Registered Horticultural Therapist, sat on the Canadian Horticultural Therapy Assoc. Board for the past 5 years & is in the process of writing 'The Forest Garden: A Northern Approach to Horticultural Therapy'.

As a community developer, Judi understands the magic that happens when community partners come together to create positive change.



Julia Tribe
WSCC
Art
Program
Facilitator

Willow Springs is very excited to have Julia Tribe as our Lead on our Art Working Group and our Lead Arts Program Facilitator. Julia comes to Thunder Bay after a 30 year career in theatre and community arts in Toronto. She is an Expressive Arts Therapist through her Creative Path practice. Julia brings an amazing wealth of knowledge, skills and most of all, energy to Willow Springs' arts programming development, delivery, documentation and evaluation. Presently she is working on a collaborative Eco Art project entitled 'Donning Nature' with WSCC.



Julia and Kaleigh (Summer Rec Therapist) in front of Southbridge Lakehead Manor.

"Art is a celebration of life and world around us. Even in troubled times, and under less than ideal circumstances, art making can lift the spirit, communicate ideas and emotions, and offer new opportunities to grow and learn".

Diane Fausek-Steinbach

home & garden

Willow Springs Creative Centre's home is historic to the Lappe Area. Lappe was founded as a community of Finnish homesteaders in the very late 1800s. Willow Springs was originally an International Co-op. It operated from 1930 to 1945. Emil Koski purchased the general store around 1948. Over the years it was a gathering place for the community serving as the local general store and post office. The grounds, under the care of Mrs. Koski, consisted of lovely gardens and a pond. To campers on the surrounding lakes, it was a favourite stop for grocery items, gas, and for the kids, candy and ice cream. The store closed in the early 80's when the Koskis grew old. The store was inherited by their son-in-law, Thomas Law. He rented the store out as a private residence until 2001 when Judi, Kathy, Lea & Liisa rented it as Willow Springs Artisan Studio & Gift Store offering art classes to people from Thunder Bay and the surrounding area. They also sold willow furniture, pottery, jewelry, sculpture and paintings created by themselves and other area artists. The community celebrated the reopening of the local landmark by returning to the "Koski's Store" to visit, buy locally made art and local food items, and tell stories about their connection to the place. In 2006, the business evolved into the incorporated, not-for-profit organization Willow Springs Creative

Centre. The setting serves as a perfect location for creative hands-on workshops and art classes, training programs and a farmers' market. WSCC is viewed by our community partners as an important destination for their clients. WSCC is constantly in the process of developing our facility & grounds into a remarkable, accessible working therapeutic & market garden and training centre. We host our weekly Willow Springs Market from the last Friday in June to the last Friday in September. We are committed to retain and build on the heritage elements of the property so that it will remain a landmark, but one that is inclusive, where all people can engage in meaningful activities, generate creative ideas and continue to exemplify rural ingenuity.

The gardens at Willow Springs Creative Centre are a work in progress. In 2007, landscape architect, Werner Schwar helped WSCC envision a plan to transform our 2 acres of land into a dynamic, art making, creative space filled with accessible therapeutic gardens, artists' stations, play areas, food making and training space. As opportunity knocks and events invite, that vision is being realized, thanks in large part to the work of our Garden Crew and by a grant from the Trillium Foundation (2007- 2009) and an Earth Day grant (2010) & Enabling Accessibility grants (2010 & 2012). We wrapped up a 3 yr Trillium grant in 2015 that allowed for organizational and social purpose enterprise development. A grant from The Fort William Rotary in 2015/16 allowed us to build a beautiful covered shelter with the help of Autism Ontario. We added an accessible tree house in 2016 with money from the same grant. We are now moving into a 2nd phase called our Backyard Plan. We will convert the backyard from lawn to more therapeutic gardens, pathways & sitting areas. It will include a Children's Garden and provide stations for our developing Grief Gardening program, The Mourning Garden. Many amazing events will take place at Willow Springs Creative Centre in the coming years.



milestones

in our development

In June 2005, Willow Springs received an OAC Arts Education Project grant for **Young Artists as Mentors Summer Art Camps**. This grant allowed us to connect with other local artists, assist in the development of emerging artists of our area and began to develop Willow Springs' profile as an arts educator. This project connected us with the Thunder Bay Art Gallery that hung the project's art show. This has proven to be a key partnership throughout WSCC's development.



In 2007, WSCC introduced their neighbours to their plans to develop therapeutic gardening programs at an Open House held at Gorham & Ware Community School which featured a free concert by a quartet from the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra.

In 2007 WSCC ran an art program for street people through a grant from Action for Neighbourhood Change entitled **Urban Art – Creating Community**. As part of the Urban Art project we were able to train 6 Artist Mentors from the Ogden Simpson neighbourhood.



Willow Springs received an OAC Aboriginal Arts Education Grant in 2006 - '**Artist Released**'. It was the catalyst for the development of WSCC as it connected us with new community partners especially The John Howard Society, Shelter House and the Correctional Facilities. Willow Springs held a well attended art show highlighting the project participants' and project artists' artwork. As a result of this grant we generated a yearly contract with the Youth Correctional Centre, now called the



Justice Ronald Lester Youth Centre to run an art program year round. This program continued for 8 years.

WSCC received an OAC Northern Arts grant in 2007 – '**Creating a Pathway**'. This project saw WSCC working with clients, volunteers and staff of the Shelter House to create a mosaic, concrete pathway in the courtyard of their new facility.



The development and production of our **Creative Life Skills Kit and Training** occurred in 2007. In partnership with The Thunder Bay John Howard Society, we created an innovative approach to offering life skills lessons. The six lessons (Telling My Story, Identifying Feelings, Reconnecting with Nature, etc) are taught through art projects. With input from Remote Aboriginal Youth Reintegration Workers employed by John Howard, aboriginal artists and elders and WSCC's staff, a portable Kit that includes a Facilitator's Manual, Art Instruction Manual and all the art supplies necessary to run the program was developed. Training in The Kit is offered by WSCC.





For 7 years WSCC hosted an Annual Youth Art Show highlighting art created by youth at the Justice Ronald Lester Youth Centre, Smith Centre and other WSCC youth classes. The shows always profiled pieces of art by all the artists working in the programs.



In June 2008, WSCC received an OAC Arts Education grant - **GREEN Art: An Environmental Art Exploration Summer Art Camps**. The project employed four youth artists as art mentors/instructors. Using natural and recyclable materials participants were able to create art with a social message.



Every year since 2009, Roots to Harvest youth have assisted in the development of our gardens. Here, they work to make the front gardens with the old car as a feature element of our beautiful, front perennial garden.

In 2010 we received an **Enabling Accessibility** grant that allowed us to install our ramp, accessible pathways, raised garden beds and renovate our bathroom. We also received an Earth Day's Community Environment Fund grant entitled Restoring Our Roots. This grant allowed us to plant up our raised beds, plant native species, trees and shrubs and run more gardening programs.



In 2009, Willow Springs Creative Centre partnered with CNIB, Cambrian Players, LU Social Work Department, Ontario March of Dimes and award winning local playwright, Eleanor Albanese, for a project called the **Northern Sky Theatre Project**. This OAC funded project saw a cast, many with vision loss, write, stage and perform a play entitled "Sight Unseen" at the university theater for hundreds of people. The project's process was life changing for many of the participants.

In 2009 the Fiskar's Orange Thumb grant was a wonderful gift to Willow Springs. We received \$1500 worth of Fiskar tools and \$1000 to purchase soil and plants. Most of these tools still work hard for us!



'Growing Independence' Gardening Program & Monty Parks Garden



Horticultural Therapy

Over a three year period WSCC's staff & volunteers, along with others interested in providing quality therapeutic gardening programs, took a series of certified Horticultural Therapy (HT) training sessions with Master Horticultural Therapist, Mitchell Hewson, from Homewood Health Centre in Guelph, Ontario. In September 2010 the training concluded when the training group traveled to Homewood in Guelph for the final session. We were able to tour the Spiral Garden at Bloorview Children's Centre in Toronto on the way to Guelph.

The Spiral Garden has been the inspiration for the Willow Springs Garden. It is our desire to establish WSCC as a training centre for northern horticultural therapy. In 2016 we trial ran our first course in Horticultural Therapy at Lakehead University. We continue to develop opportunities for learning about Horticultural Therapy in partnership with the Canadian Horticultural Therapy Assoc.



WSCC facilitated an inclusive gardening program at Community Living Thunder Bay group homes and Monty Parks Garden site for seven summers. Each week program participants, adults with intellectual & physical disabilities, engaged in vegetable gardening, garden art making, cooking & eating. Accessible vegetable garden beds were installed at the group homes and at Monty Parks Garden. In the summer of 2015, Monty Parks Garden was the highlighted community garden on the Thunder Bay

Art Gallery's Annual Garden Tour! WSCC appreciates the long term relationship that we have with CLTB. For 4 years, WSCC maintained the Monty Parks Garden and provided garden training for young adults with barriers to employment. WSCC began coordinating all activities taking place at the Monty Parks Garden including wedding and event rentals from 2017 to 2018. With Roots to Harvest moving into Monty Parks, they have now taken over the care of the garden.

Dilco ABTRS's

Growing Wheel Gardening Program

WSCC offers the Growing Wheel gardening program for indigenous children in a rural residential treatment facility. The program includes planting & tending vegetables, perennials and shrubs. The young people also make garden inspired art & continue to work on their willow dreaming spot tucked in the woods. The program wraps up each fall with a family Harvest Feast made by the children.



Dawson Dirt Diggers

2015 was the fifth and final year WSCC gardened at Dawson Court Home for the Aged. A very active group of 12 to 15 seniors took part in the gardening program. In 2014 we created a large butterfly garden in the island garden space in the driveway. This development grew out of the successful caring for monarch caterpillars that brought such joy to residents and staff when the monarchs emerged from their chrysalis. With the closing of the facility (Feb 2016) all the plants were transferred to the new Butterfly Garden at Pioneer Ridge. The Dirt Diggers painted rain barrels for 3 years in support of EcoSuperior. We thank the residents and staff of Dawson Court for allowing us to work with them. We truly miss everyone!



Ontario March of Dimes Warehouse's Community Oasis

In Sept 2012 WSCC began working with the Warehouse participants to create a new public greenspace called the MOD Community Garden. WSCC ran a weekly gardening program to help this garden flourish! The garden was featured on the Art Gallery Garden Tour in 2014!





Baggage Building Arts Centre Partnership

WSSC is an active partner with the Baggage Building Arts Centre at the waterfront. We have offered children's and adults' art classes, team building retreats, and festival art activities as well we have catered several events at the BBAC. In early 2015 we partnered with the BBAC and the Tobacco Reduction in Youth Program to offer our 'What a Drag' project that saw young artists creating interactive art pieces about living tobacco free lives.

Food Service Manager

WSSC thanks the Northern Ontario Heritage Foundation Corporation for the Internship grant in 2013 to hire a fulltime Food Service Manager. Ayla Ludwig worked to develop food related programs, products and training opportunities. We were able to hire Ayla after the internship with help from a Youth Employment Program grant from YES Employment in 2014. Ayla continued to provide amazing leadership to our Willow Springs Market and our amazing Soup & Bread Extravaganza program. She mentored new trainees and placement students as well as drew in new and returning customers. Ayla, guided WSSC into a new venture in May 2016, Our Pizza & Salad Program!



Willow Springs Creative Centre was thrilled to be the recipient of a three year Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant (2012 -2015) that allowed us to develop as a vibrant social purpose enterprise. We worked to integrate client training opportunities into many of our activities and programs. We thank the OTF for their support of Willow Springs Creative Centre!



Willow Springs' Market

Willow Springs Creative Centre received an Earth Day Canada, Community Environment Fund grant to help support the establishment of our Willow Springs' Market in 2013. The Market runs on Fridays from the last Friday of June to the last Friday of Sept. We are now in our 10th Market season this summer. The Market acts as a hub for the local community, campers and visitors to gather and celebrate. Produce, art and food products from Willow Springs are sold. Local, small producers, bakers, cooks, and artisans sell their wares each week. Each Market includes a children's art activity, fresh pizza and bread and fun! At the end of the Market season for the first 6 years, WSSC hosted a lovely Harvest Feast Fundraiser Dinner. In 2015, we also hosted our ECO Fashion Show highlighting clothing made from all natural materials. We are planning another fashion show in 2024!

Soup & Bread Extravaganza

For 9 winters WSSC has offered our innovative Soup & Bread program. 30 to 70 customers have bought in for 6 or 8 weeks. They received a large loaf of artisan bread and 2L of homemade soup weekly. This social purpose venture is set up as an employment training program for young adults with disabilities. The program is a wonderful collaboration of many; the Community Integration through Cooperative Education program and Recreation Therapy program at Confederation College, LU's Social Work placement students, volunteers and local producers. Thanks to Independent Living Resource Centre & NEW Employment Centre for funding some of our successful Trainees. The WSSC's Food Group guides our Food Service Manager, Roxanna Lysmo, who coordinates the program. **We thank Ayla Ludwig for all her incredible work to establish this on-going program.**



Enabling Accessibility Grant 2012 Kitchen Renovations!

We were able to renovate our kitchen to allow it to be used as an accessible program space and commercial kitchen. As a result we began to offer programs & training opportunities to adults and youth with disabilities wanting to learn food prep, cooking and baking skills.

Christmas House Tour

For the eight years in a row WSCC partnered with the Thunder Bay Art Gallery's Christmas House Tour. In 2016 WSCC Artisans decorated the Gallery foyer and set up demonstrations and hands-on festive art activities for the tour guests. The Christmas House Tour may return this year. Thanks to the artists and volunteers who contributed to this successful venture.



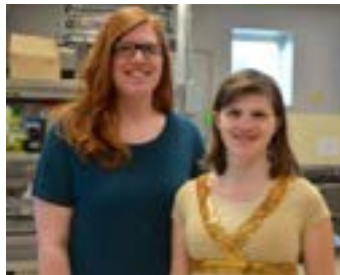
Sandy, 4th YR LU Social Work Student (left) with Amy Cizmar (right), graduate trainee, now a WSCC employee

Harvest Share Thanks so much to Tbaytel for Good for their support in 2014 of the Harvest Share program that turns unwanted fruit and vegetables from private landowners' trees and gardens into delicious local food products that are made available to the public, year round at local markets.

Harvest Share is a dynamic training program for young adults in harvesting, tree pruning, food preserving and marketing. Thanks so much to Krista Harper and Sarah Eby for the coordination of the program and their willingness to trust WSCC with the Thunder Bay Fruit Project, a project they started that has now become Harvest Share. WSCC has decided to transfer the activities of the Harvest Share project to Roots to Harvest since the project fits very well with their programming and mission.



Student Placements & Projects: WSCC continues to offer valuable placement opportunities to students in Social Work, Recreation Therapy, Outdoor Recreation, Art and Community Integration through Cooperative Education.



4th YR Waterloo U Rec Therapy Student Catherine Middleton, Summer Artist Dawne Johnson, & Food Trainee Joanna Luczak

Snow Sculpting at WinterFest

For six years a team of WSCC's artists has competed in the snow sculpting contest at the Waterfront's Snowday. We also offer a workshop for beginner snow sculptors. As part of SnowDay we have facilitated public snow sculpting sessions. In the 2019 competition WSCC's sculpture won first prize!



Winter Wonderland

From 2012 to 2015 and then again in 2018 and 2019 we created a wonderful winter wonderland on WSCC's property. Home schoolers, school groups, the public and Autism Ont families came to play and take part in facilitated sessions of winter fun! Thanks to all our Rec Therapy students and volunteers for all their work! in 2020, COVID forced us to cancel this fun event.



Forest School

For 3 years WSCC provided a rural location for Connect the Dots' Forest School. Children attended a nature based school program one day/week under the instruction of Natasha Robertson assisted by parent volunteers. Natasha has moved her Forest School operations to her own property at Surprise Lake.



The Tree House Tribe!



For 3 years this homeschooling co-op met once/week at WSCC around 20 weeks/year. This wonderful group of children and their parents use WSCC's space for their group activities. This partnership saw the home schoolers assisting with gardening and cleaning tasks at WSCC and WSCC's staff leading art classes in exchange for the work.

Gift Basket Sales WSCC introduced a new fundraising effort over the past 7 years. Harvest Baskets & Holiday Baskets are filled with WSCC's and Market Vendors' baking, preserves and local veggies and pre-ordered by customers.



Pies! Pies! Pies!

Building on the success of our other food programs WSCC introduced our Pie Sale in 2016, 5 different pies over 8 weeks, filled with local fruit. We hope to continue to offer this DELICIOUS program ... another excellent training program for young adults with disabilities! 2022 Pies will return.

Willow Springs Creative Centre was excited to partner with Tangled ART + DISABILITY, a progressive arts organization based in Toronto that promotes, exhibits and supports professional artists with disabilities. Tangled has been partnering with Thunder Bay, under Zoe Gordon's lead. WSCC was thrilled to work with Tangled on their Creation Station at March of Dimes Warehouse in March 2016. We look forward to working with them again.



Pizza & Salad Extravaganza

WSCC continued to expand on our food service training opportunities for adults with disabilities by introducing our new Pizza & Salad Extravaganza in May 2016. In 2021 we had 70 eager customers for this food service program. 2022's program will begin mid May.



Special thanks to OPG for their generous donations (2016 & 2017) in support of our Soup & Bread program and the revamping of our Creative Life Skills Kit.



WSCC was thrilled to receive a grant & loan through PARO's SENO program. This also introduced us to the NWOntario Innovation Centre. WSCC was honoured to receive a nomination for Innovative Project of the Year Award for our Soup & Bread Program.



Shelter & Treehouse Grant from the Fort William Rotary

WSCC thanks Autism Ontario for partnering with us to allow the FW Rotary to donate funds enabling us to construct a much needed covered shelter to allow for more outdoor programming. We built an accessible tree house in the spring of 2016 so anyone can experience the wonder of being up in the trees! Thanks Eric & Isaac for all your amazing work!



For the past 9 years WSCC has provided year-round art, gardening & food programming for the Thunder Bay Chapter of Autism Ontario.

Cadin did some of his high school placement hours with WSCC in the fall of 2019.



In 2015, WSCC began an enthusiastic partnership with OPTIONS northwest. WSCC's artists worked with people served by OPTIONS Northwest to create a series of watercolour Christmas Cards & 500 wooden ornaments as special gifts to celebrate OPTIONS northwest's 50th Anniversary. We continued the partnership for the next 4 years creating more cards, wooden & clay ornaments, wreaths and twig trees and an amazing rain barrel for the EcoSuperior auction.

Every summer for the past 14 years Willow Springs has had a wonderful group of student employees. We thank the Summer Experience Program through the provincial government and the Canada Summer Jobs program through the federal government for the funding that allows us to bring on these enthusiastic workers!



Summer Students 2021

We were excited to welcome Mallory Gresch, Eric Jamsa, Maeve Pylpchuk and Alyssa Lotas as our summer students through Canada Summer Jobs.

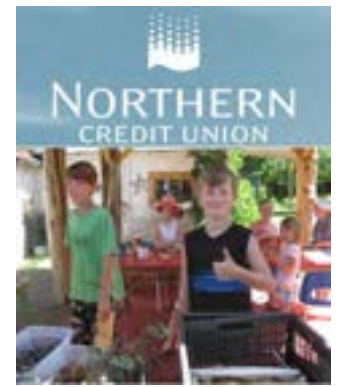
Added to our team were Abbi & Kaitlyn Miller, Alex Krawczuk and Ava Alberta supported by Megan through funding from the Independent Living Resource Centre. These young adults made an amazing team! Thanks to Tammeron for her management support.



Thanks to the Northern Credit Union that helped fund our Children's Drop In Art Classes in the summer of 2016.



Our Little Library has remained busy throughout its years. Take a book, leave a book... check it out. There is a great selection of children's and adults' books. Thanks to Hanna for the upgraded paint job. Stop by to see it.



Each summer since Willow Springs began we have offered dynamic children's summer art camps. This past summer the theme of the camp was **Celebrating Pollinators!** The theme was chosen to go along with our selection as a Butterflyway Ranger with the David Suzuki Foundation in 2021. We celebrated with an Art Camp/Market Pollinator Parade!



Creative Retreats!

For many years WSCC has been offering Creative Team Building Retreats for organizations and groups. Groups of 6 to 20 people spend a full or half day working together to create collaborative art pieces, get to know one another better, build cohesion, debrief, plan for the future, and of course...eat good food.

St. Joe's Social Workers created this beautiful stained glass mosaic.



PASSPORT CLASSES

In 2016 WSCC began offering in-home art, gardening and food related classes for people receiving Passport funding. We have a promotional brochure highlighting our programs available to everyone receiving this funding.



Since EcoSuperior began their Rain Barrel Auction WSCC has donated 2 to 3 barrels each year. In 2018 we worked with Autism Ontario on a Boreal Animal themed barrel. We also worked with Jean Marshall, a beading expert, on this lovely barrel. It won the prize for best Artist Group submission.

For years WSCC has provided art programming to the city's 55 Plus Centres. We were happy to continue to do so throughout 2019 -2020. We expanded our programming to North McIntyre Centre and West Arthur Community Centre year round. COVID stopped all this programming for 2020-21. We will return this summer!



Willow Springs hosted a grand Garden Party at Monty Parks Garden on Sept 10th to celebrate Grandparents' Day in 2017.

WSSC continues to host the Recreation Therapy students from Confederation College at Willow Springs for a session designed to show how accessible art, food and gardening programming fit into a Rec Therapy practice.



After 7 amazing years with WSSC, **Ayla Ludwig** decided to explore new employment opportunities. Ayla was the driving force behind all of WSSC's Food Programs. Ayla now oversees the placements of CICE students for the college. WSSC is excited to work with her in this role.

Dulux Paint Grant... Thanks so much for helping us give WSSC's buildings a face lift!



WSSC was very grateful to receive a one year full-time internship through **NOHFC** in 2019. The grant allowed us to hire **Jen LaFrance**, an incredible young woman, as our Inclusive Art Programmer. Jen has a Masters in Fine Arts and her certification as an Art Therapist. Her contributions to WSSC were so valuable we hired her! After a second year, Jen moved on and opened her own practice, Clearwater Art Therapy.



WSSC continues to garden with the students at G&W School. The students plant, harvest and prepare enough food to make 4 salads and chocolate zucchini cake for everyone at the annual school's Meet the Teachers BBQ in September each year.



We were thankful to receive a Rural Economic Development grant through the provincial government that allowed us to explore ways to expand our Willow Springs Market, Soup and Bread Extravaganza and Pizza and Salad program, how to share and access food production resources within the Lappe/Kam area and create more local employment opportunities in food service.



The Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association gathered for their 2018 Annual Conference and AGM at Willow Springs Creative Centre and Lakehead University on Sept 20th and 21st, 2018. Willow Springs was honoured to host this event and extends an invitation to anyone interested in therapeutic gardening to join our CHTA Regional Branch.



Under Jen's guidance, WSSC began offering a 6 week Women's Art Series that has run in the winter and or spring for the past three years.

This winter it ran as an on-line program.

We moved to a on-line Zoom format once COVID arrived. This allowed the art series to be attended by people and instructors outside our area. This new programming format opened up additional opportunities for WSSC.



Megan, one of our 2019 summer students, standing in the middle, with her mom and grandma at the end of a Lazy Dames art class that she taught. Our Lazy Dames of Summer art series will run for it's 20th year in 2022.

Our Soup & Bread Extravaganza ran out of the RFDA for its last time in the fall of 2019. We thank the RFDA for the many years of commercial kitchen use. In January 2020, we decided to run the program from the WSCC's kitchen. In the fall of 2022 the program will run out of the newly renovated Lappe Ski Centre commercial kitchen.

WSCC facilitated the Nanabijou Childcare Centre's strategic planning process from August 2019 - Mar 2020 and created an amazing child friendly poster that they display in their lobby illustrating their strategic plan. Special thanks to Hanna Wainio for her outstanding illustrations and graphic art.



In 2019, Jen LaFrance and Judi Vinni offered a 8 week Creative Life Skills program for people accessing Ontario Works who lived on Fort William First Nation. The program included art, gardening and food making.



Eleanor and Her Tea
In Dec 2019, we held 3 performances of our interactive podcast entitled 'When I'm Dreaming, I'm Not Blind'. This project was created by the CNIB First Nations Support Group & coordinated by WSCC, facilitated by Eleanor Albanese with Sound Artist, Zoe Gordon with funding from the Ontario Arts Council.



We are so proud of long time employee, Amy Cizmar, for her amazing performance at the Canadian Special Olympics. Amy won two bronze and one silver in the 3 downhill ski events. Amy will compete in the World Championships in 2023.



WSSC is very honoured to partner with Southbridge Lakehead Long Term Care Home. For the past five years we have offered year round art and gardening programming for a group of eager seniors. In 2019, we entered a rain barrel painted by the residents and WSSC's artists into the EcoSuperior rain barrel auction. It won the best group theme award. We thank Caroline Cameron-Fikis for supporting the work of Willow Springs.



In Sept 2019, our **2nd annual Harry Potter Inspired Festival** was an amazing success, grossing over \$10,000 and brings over 600 people lots of joy. It is our plan to host our 3rd annual HP Festival this September if COVID allows.



WSSC was invited to showcase our participants & artists work at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery in 2019.



Our 2019 summer art camp had a Harry Potter theme. The kids who attended help to make new props and costumes for the festival in September. They also all attended the event and acted as students and dementors. Very exciting!



The city's snow sculpting competition in 2019 had the theme of Thunder Bay's 50th anniversary. WSSC's salute to the merger of the Times Journal and the News Chronicle won 1st prize! The sculpture featured Tia and her dog delivering the new Chronicle Journal.



Special thanks to Hanna & Eric Wainio, Judi Vinni & Julia Tribe for their great work.



In 2019 WSSC took on a new food service venture providing all the food service at Lappe Nordic Ski Centre. This has given our Trainees more work opportunities year round. Chad worked as part of our food service team in this fast paced, intense service of Finnish pancakes, soup & bread and baking. We are thrilled to announce that Lappe Nordic Ski Centre has received funding to renovate the Ski Centre which will include a new, accessible commercial kitchen for October 2022. Willow Springs was asked to design the kitchen and will oversee it once complete.





The Comfort Project with Eleanor Albanese 2021
 WSCC was thrilled to collaborate with Eleanor once again on this inclusive, interactive, COVID friendly project. It included inclusive workshops where people explored memories of what brought them comfort. The performance part of the project was the telling of a beautiful story by Eleanor with puppets, an inclusive choir, a soundscape by Zoe Gordon, dancers, animators and an interactive nature walk from station to station at Willow Springs. The project finished with a exhibit at the Gallery & a short film.



David Suzuki Foundation Butterflyway Project 2021

Over the growing season of 2021, Willow Springs coordinated our Butterflyway project. WSCC & a dozen volunteers planted seeds and transplanted seedlings, divided perennials and native plants and shared them with Willow Springs. We then created Pollinator Patch Kits for people and organizations to establish and or expand 20 pollinator gardens. We offered workshop for Autism Ontario, the public through the City of Thunder Bay and at Lazy Dames highlighting pollinators and their needs. Our summer kids' art camp was also all about pollinators and included an awesome parade at our weekly Friday Market.



Willow Springs continues to provide excellent placements for college and university students. We were thrilled to have Prachi join our team in 2020 from the Recreation Therapy program.

We also provide employment opportunities for young adults through Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ). Due to COVID, the CSJ program was extended until Feb 2022. This allowed us to hire Gwen who added her amazing skills, enthusiasm and hard work to our team.



WS Book Club
 Although short lived, WSCC offered half a year of virtual book club gatherings to help connect people during the depths of COVID. We chose books that highlighted WSCC's philosophy. The book club may return.

Nature Crafting Project

With a grant from the City of Thunder Bay we were able to run a series of intergenerational workshops using all natural materials down at the waterfront. People from ages 1 to 93 took part.





Holiday Market Successful During COVID
 We welcomed many holiday shoppers to our little gift store during December. Featuring 38 local makers, the feeling in the shop was one of quaint, neighbourly, old fashioned Christmas spirit.



Catering for the Thunder Bay District Health Unit
 WSCC was thrilled to collaborate with the local health unit for 2 spring BBQ dinners for people living in the Academy Heights area and the Windsor neighbourhood. WSCC cooked up 200 meals!



Holiday Gift Baskets! WSCC sold hundreds of Valentine, Spring, Mother's & Father's Day and Fall Harvest Baskets in 2021



Sprouting into Spring Zoom Workshop with Kits for Autism Ontario Families

Willow Spring created 50 Kits and sent them out across Northern Ontario (Kenora to Sudbury) then hosted a 2 hour long Zoom workshop for participants to celebrate the coming spring and the wonders of planting and seeds!



WS Market Helps Bring Community Together Over the Past 2 Years
 WSCC's weekly market continues to grow and add new vendors and additional food and artisan products. It provides a wonderful Friday stop over on the way to camp or when people are just out for a country drive. During COVID we have had to adjust a few things to meet regulations, but we have been able to continue and provide a safe, community space where people can meet, visit and feel more connected. We look forward to this year's market an hope we will be able to offer sit down dining, children's art activities and food samples like in the past.



Thomas fills soup jars while on a Work Placement (Feb -May 2022) through Independent Living Resource Centre. He has been able to contribute to our Soup & Bread Program, catering, Autism Ontario Workshop, Spring Gift Box, and cleaning the basement!



Roxanna Lysmo is one of the unsung heroes of Willow Springs Creative Centre. As our Food Service Manager and our Lead Gardener her ability to nurture plants and her incredible skills in the kitchen create magic over & over!

Community Building Fund Grant



This 1 year grant is allowing WSCC to:

- Survey community partners to identify how we can deliver art programming that works within restrictions and new protocols
- Trial run adapted art programming for people living in group homes
- Provide our key staff and Artists with video production training & tools
- Create, deliver & evaluate virtual arts programming using Zoom, videos and kits

Enabling Accessibility Grant "A Centre for All" Project

The purpose of this grant is allowing WSCC to:

- Renovate our 1930s Centre's buildings by upgrading the wiring
- Replace windows and make an accessible back door
- Upgrade some kitchen equipment to allow for increased accessibility for Trainees
- Begin renovating our future Pottery/Mosaic Studio to make it accessible
- Expand our employment training programs to allow us to train and hire more people with disabilities.



Dye Garden Project with Artist Tuija Hansen

In 2021, WSCC began partnering with Tuija Hansen, a local textile artist to help her grow more plants at Willow Springs for making natural dyes. Tuija came to our weekly Market and shared her skills and created interactive activities for visitors. She taught 2 Silk Scarf Dyeing workshops. We are excited to have Tuija back again this year to continue her project.



ADAPT (Adapting Delivery of Art Programs using Technology) Grant

This grant is allowing WSCC to:
Upgrade our technology & our digital skills
Create customized videos and virtual art programming
Relaunch & update our website



Our Backyard Plan



As we move on to Phase 2 of our Outdoor Space our Garden Group & Lead Gardener have developed a plan to convert the backyard into pathways and gardens that will one day provide stations for our grief gardening program call The Mourning Garden.

Willow Springs Creative Centre strives to welcome anyone and everyone who would like to participate in our programs, services and or projects. We talk about the Willow Springs' continuum that sees babies at meetings, toddlers at the Market, children at art camp, youth working as summer employees, adults with disabilities training for employment, art class participants in group homes and long term care facilities creating, people in treatment centres growing vegetables, campers stopping by to stock up on the way to the lake, artists and makers selling at our Markets and students on placement honing their skills. Inclusion is the goal.

Willow Springs Creative Centre's Board

The Willow Springs Creative Centre Board is the legal head and backbone of the organization. Board members support the Centre's work primarily through monthly meetings where the Centre's upcoming activities and finances are reviewed, decisions are made, goals are set, challenges are discussed and accomplishments are celebrated. Board members' willingness to share their opinions and relevant experience is greatly valued. The WSCC board makes decisions using consensus. They often help with other tasks from administrative to creative jobs, although such assistance is purely voluntary. Board members are required to join a committee/working group of particular interest to them, such as the Development Committee, Food Group, Art Group, Garden Group, Project Advisory Committees, Nomination Committee, and/or other ad hoc committees that arise. The Board meets once/month throughout the year, except in August.

Current Board Members



Sarah Peters
(Vice Chair)
joined in 2016

Her expertise includes medicine, community development, sports and outdoor recreation, soap making, & small business management



Caroline Cameron-Fikis
(Secretary)
joined in 2016

Her expertise includes recreational therapy, program development, working with seniors in long term care, fundraising, gardening & creative expression

Gwen McCrone
joined 2022
Her expertise includes farming, forestry, herbology, falconry, photography, organizational & community development



Lisa Haessler
joined 2021

Her expertise includes community development, strategic planning, group facilitation, economic development, organizational structures, digital communications & marketing



Jacquie Wheatley
(Treasurer)
joined in 2021

Her expertise includes education, special needs education, community development, program development & supervision, dog sledding, outdoor recreation

Tammeron Karaim
joined 2021

Her expertise includes small business management, marketing, customer service, food industry, astrology, digital communication, writing, complementary therapies



Charlene Loponen
joined 2022

Her expertise includes inclusion, accessibility, developmental services, adult education, visual art, gardening, home schooling, rural living



Julie Kivinen
joined in 2018

Her expertise includes community development, organizational structures, policies & procedures, public health professional writing, creative expression, herbal knowledge and rural living



Kaleigh Wiltsey

joined 2022
Her expertise includes recreational therapy, inclusion, counseling for youth-at-risk, ironwork & construction, food service & fun!



Liisa Mikkola (Chair)

Co-Founder of Willow Springs Creative Centre
joined 2006-2008, returned 2018
Her expertise includes community development, proposal writing, organizational structures and operations, policies & procedures, accessibility issues, correctional services, housing issues, pottery, willow furniture making and stroke recovery

Willow Springs Creative Centre Board of Directors, Working Groups and Committees Information

Willow Springs Board of Directors

Members sign on for a 1 or 2 year term which can be renewed.

The board positions consists of the executive (Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary) and several additional directors. The board can have 6 to 12 members. The board meets once a month except in August. Each board member is required to sit on at least one Committee or Working Group in which they are passionate.

Working Groups

The groups centred around WSCC's three main areas of work;

Art, Therapeutic Gardening and Food

These Working Groups are made up of Willow Springs' Board Members, staff, volunteers and community members interested in each area of focus. The Working Groups provide advise and guidance to all the programs, training, and services in which Willow Springs Creative Centre engages. They generate new ideas for us to pursue.

Each Working Group meets 3 to 4 times/year.

Board Committees

Development Committee: Working from the lead of the Board the DevCom searches for funding opportunities that match with the organizations needs and directions. They write proposals, access letters of support and submit grant applications.

This committee is vital to WSCC's sustainability. The committee meets and works through email and Google Docs as required related to grant deadlines.

Project Advisory Committee: Forms when project funding requires an overseeing advisory committee. They oversee the implementation of a project and ensure goals, objective and timelines are met and or adjusted as needed. They ensure documentation of the project and all necessary record keeping is being done. They participate in project activities if they want or are needed.

Nomination Committee: This committee comes into action in the spring of each year to help find potential new board members. They update the board orientation kit and send it out for any new potential board members or Working Group members. They also consult with all sitting board members in private to find out their intentions for the next year.

Additional **Ad Hoc** Committees are struck as needed.

WS Garden Crew:

This is a group of volunteers who enjoy gardening or want to learn to garden. The Garden Crew is scheduled to garden throughout the growing season at Willow Springs or other program sites WSCC works such as Gorham & Ware School, Dilico sites, Lakehead Southbridge, etc. Call outs for additional Garden Crew members are made to the community and community partners each year. the Garden Crew is guided by the Garden Working Group and WSCC's Lead Gardener, Roxanna Lysmo.

Each year the WSCC's Board and staff attend a **full day** strategic planning retreat to evaluate the past year, develop and revise plans for the upcoming year and set future goals.

