

Message from the President and Executive Director





n July 12, 1949, an application was submitted to the Ontario Provincial Secretary's Office by Robert Gordon Nicholas Laidlaw, Roderick Walter Lukin Laidlaw and Terence Sheard with the following purpose stated in the petition:

"Your Petitioners are desirous of obtaining Letters Patent under the provisions of The Companies Act constituting your Petitioners and such others as may become members of the Corporation thereby created a body corporate and politic without share capital under the name of Laidlaw Foundation".

On September 13, 1949, the Foundation was formally

incorporated to serve a number of objectives, among others:

"In payments to or for the benefit of any charitable or educational organization which carries on its work solely in the Province of Ontario or of any religious organization which carries on its work solely within Canada."

"In payments to or for the benefit of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind or the Canadian Red Cross Society."

The first meeting of the Board of Directors was held on Thursday, October 27, 1949, in the offices of Blakes, Anglin, Osler & Cassels, at the Canadian Bank of Commerce Building in Toronto, with all of the first Directors of the Foundation present. One of the Board's first decisions was to elect Rod Laidlaw as President and accept the first donation of \$50,000 from Robert A. Laidlaw.

With that initial contribution and bold action, a leading Family Foundation with a public interest mandate was born. Since then, Laidlaw has been at the forefront of enabling social change, supporting the arts and the environment, and much more. For 70 years, the Foundation has served the public interest with imagination, humility and boldness. Anniversaries are opportunities to reflect on the past, celebrate accomplishments, and

 Portraits of Bob Smith, President (far left) and Jehad Aliweiwi, Executive Director (right)

learn from a rich journey of partnerships, investments, granting and convening. We honour the past and focus on the future. As the President of the Rockefeller Foundations, Judith Rodin, once said, "Anniversaries are not to be missed". We are certainly not going to miss the opportunity to reflect on seven decades of innovative engagement and action in support of the public good.

The Foundation's 70th anniversary is an opportunity for us to pay tribute to Robert. A. Laidlaw and publicly recommit to his dedication to philanthropy in order to inspire a new generation of change-makers and activists, whose actions can ensure that the next 70 years are better for all of us. We will strive to maintain our relevance as new eras bring new

challenges. For the next seventy years, we aspire to be ahead of the curve, not behind it.

Laidlaw chose to further mark this milestone through a meaningful Legacy contribution, a one-time donation to an organization, initiative, or a cause, whose work and mission inspires us and reminds us of the philanthropic vision and spirit of its Founder. By selecting Feathers of Hope, a youth-driven movement dedicated to the empowerment of First Nations youth, to be the recipient of the Legacy Grant, we hope to bring attention to an urgent problem that has significant impact on the lives of young people today.

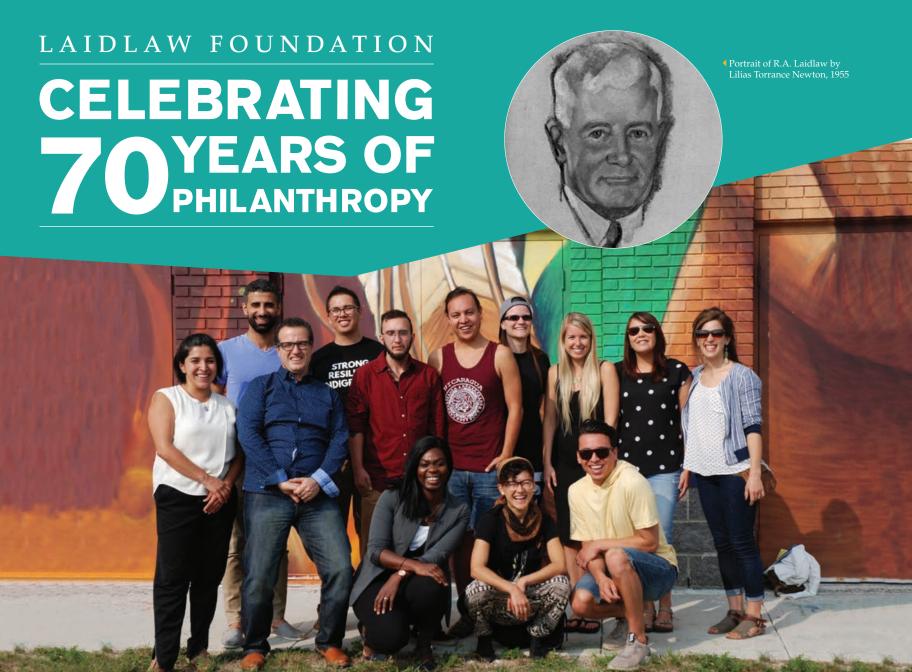
Anniversaries are also a time to celebrate with our friends, members and sector partners, which is why we have invited you today to the National Ballet School, an organization dear-to-the-heart of Robert A. Laidlaw, to attend Laidlaw's 70th anniversary gala dinner and to celebrate with us.

We thank you for being part of our celebration and invite you to learn more about the Foundation's first 70 years highlighted in this publication. The goals and vision of the Founders to serve the public good have guided us for 70 years and will continue to inspire and guide us for many years to come.

Bob Smith President Jehad Aliweiwi Executive Director

Bob Smith





In the seven decades since its establishment, the Laidlaw Foundation has left its imprint on an exceptionally broad range of Canadian sectors, from social policy debates to the arts, academe, conservation, youth and even philanthropic case law.

stablished in 1949 by Robert A.
Laidlaw, the Foundation's
early charitable work supported a
focused number of well-established
Toronto institutions, including Upper
Canada College, the Hospital for
Sick Children, the National Ballet
School and Central Neighbourhood
House. But over time, the
Foundation's mandate and its impact
broadened significantly, as did the
Board's conception of its composition
and role.

Between the 1960s and the 1990s, the Foundation became increasingly focused on issues such as effective social welfare, poverty and vulnerable populations, and environmental issues. Drawing on its early support for Quetico Provincial Park, the Foundation has used its capital and grantmaking capacity to support conservation and environmental projects across Ontario.

The Foundation also came to be known as an innovative and ambitious funder of the arts, especially in disciplines like theatre and ballet. Its grants supported cutting-edge cultural projects, such as Buddies in Bad Times, Theatre Passe Muraille, and the Ballet Creole, that expanded Canada's artistic language.

Lastly, in the field of advocacy and programming for at-risk youth, the Foundation commissioned research,

supported vital institutions like the Dr. R.G.N. Laidlaw Centre at the Institute of Child Studies at the University of Toronto, and participated in national campaigns that resulted in key changes to public policy, such as the introduction of the Child Tax Benefit.

Heading into its eighth decade. the Laidlaw Foundation has firmly established itself as an innovationminded leader in Canada's philanthropic sector with its strategy for fostering partnerships, long-term focus on youth and a distinguished track record of progressive investment in Canadian civil society. The Foundation is a proud signatory to the Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations and has a strong and active Indigenous Youth and Community Futures Fund Advisory Committee.

The Foundation's Indigenous Advisory Committee with staff members, Sept. 2017

The 1950s: Launching a foundation



Portrait of Rod Laidlaw, ca. 1950. Rod served as president of the Foundation from 1949 until his untimely death in 1971.

Archives of Ontario (AO), fonds 4699, series 10, file 29.

he Laidlaw Foundation traces its roots to the R. Laidlaw Lumber Company, established in the late 19th century by Robert Laidlaw. By the 1930s, Robert's sons, Walter Cameron (W.C.) and Robert Alexander (R.A.) not only jointly ran the company, but also served as directors on other boards and were increasingly active as philanthropists, donating funds to institutions like Upper Canada College, Central Neighbourhood House and the Hospital for Sick Children. As their charitable work expanded, they saw the need for a formal vehicle to channel their giving.

The Laidlaw Foundation was formally established in 1949, with R.A. Laidlaw's sons, Rod and Nick, serving as president and secretary respectively. They initially sought to use the newly formed organization to

continue the philanthropic work that took place prior to 1949. In 1951, the new Hospital for Sick Children opened its doors. R.A. had served as chair since 1934 and was one of the major donors. He also was a frequent visitor who liked to engage with the medical staff and visit young patients.

The 1950s also saw the Foundation's first moves into fields that would later become far more significant to its

mission: culture and the environment. Through personal giving and regular donations by the Foundation, R.A. served as an early patron of the National Ballet of Canada, established in 1951 by choreographer Celia Franca. And in 1955, the Foundation made the first of a series of annual donations to the Quetico Provincial Park Foundation, marking its initial foray into ecological conservation.



Robert Alexander, Walter, Rod and Nick Laidlaw with a senior staff member at the opening of Laidlaw Lumber's 50 Oak Street building, 1955. AO, fonds 230, series 9, box B230469.

R.A. Laidlaw escorting Princess Elizabeth through the new Hospital for Sick Children, 1951. Courtesy of Upper Canada College Archives.



The 1960s: Institution building



Graduation portrait of Mary Claire Thomas, 1949. University of Toronto Archives, Torontonensis (1949), p. 36.

n 1960, Upper Canada College's new Upper School opened its doors, the culmination of years of philanthropic support from the Laidlaw family and Foundation, with more than \$200,000 donated to the UCC Foundation and Emergency Building Fund during the 1950s. The following year, W.C. Laidlaw died. In his will, he added \$5 million to the Foundation's endowment, which, at the time,

Two Meals on Wheels volunteers delivering a meal to one of the program's grateful housebound clients, 1965. *Courtesy of St. Christopher House.*



was distributing over \$100,000 annually to various charities. The additional capital allowed the annual disbursements to grow four-fold.

Capacity building characterized much of the decade that followed, beginning with the hiring of Mary Claire Thomas, the Foundation's first secretary and a key figure in the management and development of the organization for the next 20 years. In 1963, the Foundation's board established its first expert advisory committee, as well as a fellowship program intended to fill a research funding gap by supporting advanced training in social and behavioural sciences. The advisory committee in particular had a mandate to provide robust advice for grant applications and pushed the Foundation to become more professional in its outlook. Those moves allowed the Foundation to make important contributions to both social policy research and services designed to ameliorate pressing issues such as poverty, housing, racism and the elderly. The Foundation's \$36,000 contribution to a 1965 national welfare study helped muster support for an anti-poverty secretariat. Over the next four years, the Foundation helped finance one of Canada's first Meals on Wheels programs and a public housing project, both as pilots.

In addition to its forays into social policy, the Foundation during this period also supported other cultural/heritage projects, such as the National Ballet Guild (over \$75,000), the Royal Ontario Museum (approximately \$100,000) and the St. Lawrence Hall restoration (\$29,200).



The 1970s:

A foray into social justice



Cover of Pollution Probe's newsletter "environmental education," Summer, 1975. The Foundation supported this environmental organization and its pivotal programs from the early 1970s until the early 2000s.

n August 1, 1970, The Globe and Mail reported that Vancouverbased forestry giant MacMillan Bloedel had acquired the R. Laidlaw Lumber Co. for an undisclosed sum - a deal that marked the family's exit from the resource business founded close to 100 years earlier.

Through this decade, the Foundation continued to broaden its institutional capacity to carry out its philanthropic mandate, supporting culture, education and social justice more strategically while also engaging the next generation of family members. In 1974, the board established a three-member family committee consisting of Bob Smith, Jamie Laidlaw and Lyn Apgar, with an initial \$50,000 annual granting budget. The Foundation also endowed, in 1977, the Laidlaw Award, a \$30,000 fellowship

awarded to researchers nominated by the advisory committee.

Those moves set the stage for the Foundation's activities during this decade - for example, \$118,000 in support for a three-year pilot project funding the Harriet Tubman Centre, an independent organization offering youth and educational programs for Toronto's Black community and specifically immigrants from the Caribbean; and support for psychiatric and psychological research on breaking the cycle of inter-generational child abuse and reaching at-risk youth. The Foundation and Ontario's ministry of community and social services jointly funded a ground-breaking interdisciplinary symposium on "hard-to-reach youth" in 1978, organized by McMaster University



child welfare expert Dr. Dan Offord, who later presented his findings to the Senate.

These initiatives reflected an historic shift at the Foundation, proposed by

board member Bruce Quarrington, a clinical psychologist and colleague of Nick Laidlaw. Nick was now president of the Foundation. In 1977, Quarrington recommended that the Foundation become an "open"

institution, expanding from a four to seven-person board that had no more than three family members. The change in the board's size and character took effect during the 1980s.

The 1980s:

Investing in culture and conservation

expanded its fellowship program by

establishing a fund for advanced

studies in law (1984-1991). In this

period, the Foundation made the

support of high-profile cultural

Portrait of Nathan Gilbert, ca. 2010.

n 1982, the board hired Nathan Gilbert to replace Mary Claire Thomas as executive administrator (later executive director) following her retirement. A 30-year-old with a masters of social work from the University of Toronto, Gilbert came to the Foundation following a stint at an intergovernmental social welfare group, and with considerable

volunteer work. During his tenure at the helm of the Foundation, he shaped its evolution, particularly in its social advocacy work.

One of the Foundation's most significant initiatives during this decade was an investment of \$250,000 aimed at encouraging the spending by \$400 million. It also

undertakings a key priority; these included programs like the International Festival of Authors. capital campaigns such as Roy Ontario government to boost welfare Thomson Hall and a \$300,000 experience doing community multi-year grant to the Canadian Music Centre for a project that Children in bathing suits gazing recorded major Canadian composers. across the lake at downtown Toronto, with a water pollution The board also approved a \$200,000 sign behind them, 1986. These annual grant for Great Lakes signs were posted along the waterfront during this period conservation and provided \$45,000 due to high levels of pollution. Photographed by in grants and loans to the Nature Mike Slaughter. Conservancy of Canada for the TPL, Toronto Star Series, TPSA0011031F. acquisition, in eastern Ontario, of a 3,800-acre open tree bog, a sensitive ecosystem vulnerable to encroachment from sod/peat farming. Opening ceremony of the Los Angeles Olympic summer games featuring Alex Baumann carrying the Canadian flag, July, 1984. The Foundation provided funding to the Canadian Olympic team while they were preparing for the games. Photographed by Jim Marrithew. Courtesy of The Canadian Press.

One of the most impactful developments during the decade flowed from \$262,580 in Foundation grants to amateur sports organizations, including the Canadian Track and Field Association, the Commonwealth Games of Canada and the Olympic Trust of Canada. Ontario's public trustee challenged the donations as ineligible for tax deductions under the Charities Accounting Act. But in a November, 1984 ruling, Ontario's Divisional Court held that a lower court judge was correct in allowing the donations a far-reaching decision that reversed an old charity law tradition that viewed sports as outside the realm of philanthropic activity. This precedent-setting case changed the way Canadian amateur sports organizations raised funds.



The 1990s:

Prioritizing children



Portrait of Nick Laidlaw, ca. 1970. Archives of Ontario (AO), fonds 4699, series 10, file 29.

In a decade that began with a tough recession and then saw waves of spending cuts, the Foundation rededicated itself to children's issues. beginning with the 1991 launch of its Children at Risk program and culminating with its backing of the influential Children's Agenda and related policies such as the National Child Benefit. Responding to a 1989 all-party motion in the House of Commons to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000, the Foundation, through the Children At Risk initiative, undertook policy research, monitored government actions, and tracked progress by supporting organizations such as the Vanier Institute and Campaign 2000.

These efforts prompted governments across Canada to take more comprehensive steps to gather data on child well-being to help decision-makers determine whether public policy was leading to improvements. The Foundation further enhanced its commitment to children's welfare with a \$1 million donation to U of T's Institute for Child Study as a tribute to Nick Laidlaw, a psychologist who dedicated his life to the Centre and served as president of the Foundation from 1971 to 1989. The Dr. R.G.N. Laidlaw Centre was dedicated on April 2, 1992, two years after his passing.

While the Foundation carried on its broad-based philanthropic support of cultural and environmental projects through the 1990s, the board's focus on children found its way into a range of related projects. In 1995, the Foundation provided some of the funding for a much needed renovation of Central Neighbourhood House,

a busy settlement agency/community centre that Walter Laidlaw began supporting in 1911 and was taken up by subsequent generations. By the mid-1990s, CNH served 26,000 people in Cabbagetown, including many lower-income families with children.

Similarly, the Foundation built on earlier environmental stewardship programs, such as the Great Lakes Initiative, which provided \$200,000 annually from 1988 to 1997 for water quality projects. The goal was to ensure that the Great Lakes were "sustainable, equitable, and enjoyable." Other conservation initiatives included bi-national policy advocacy, land conservation, and the rehabilitation of the Great Lakes ecosystem. The Foundation also began supporting the Sustainability

Network in 1998. The Network ostensibly existed to improve the management of environmental NGOs. Yet the Foundation and its expert advisors saw this investment as a means of integrating health and child welfare advocacy with pressing issues such as ozone depletion and poor air quality. As board president Joyce Zemans noted in the 1998 annual report, this type of initiative reflected "a new coherence" to the Foundation's work.

Top right: Children playing at the R.G.N. Laidlaw Centre around the time of its opening in April, 1992. Photographed by Jewel Randolph. *University of Toronto Archives, A*2012-009/041 (19).

Below right: Students from Danforth Collegiate Institute monitoring the water quality at Toronto Bay on Earth Day, ca. 1999. This initiative was supported by the Foundation grantee, Citizens' Environmental Watch. Courtesy of Citizens' Environmental Watch.



The 2000s:

Pursuing a civic agenda

The Foundation marked its 50th anniversary in 1999 with the publication of *Making Change*, a history co-edited by Nathan Gilbert and Joyce Zemans, released in 2001.

During the next few years, the Foundation's work came to focus on issues related to social equity, such as building inclusive cities (2003, in partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities) and youth infrastructure, through a range of engagement programs.

A \$15,000 grant to the newly formed Toronto Civic Action Network (2003) also reflected the Foundation's interest in organizations that work on urban issues across a range of matters, from education and fiscal sustainability to culture. The Foundation was continuing to expand

its support for alternative arts projects and Toronto's cultural landscape with grants to companies like Theatre Passe Muraille, Factory Theatre, Ballet Creole, Puppet Mongers, Tarragon Theatre, Buddies in Bad Times and the Janak Khendry Dance Company. As of 2001, 159 arts grants represented over a third of the Foundation's total expenditures of \$2.6 million.

The mix of initiatives reflected the Foundation's priorities, which the board and staff honed over the next three years into the core pillars of its mission: civic engagement, social

Buddies in Bad Times production of The Boys in the Band, June, 1999. Photographed by David Hawe. Courtesy of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre.



Top right: Ballet Creole performance, ca. 2000.

Bottom right: Colanthony Humphrey performing a live graffiti demonstration at the launch of ArtReach, Whipper Snapper Gallery, August 22, 2006. *Courtesy of ArtReach*.

inclusion, diversity and youth engagement. The Foundation's programs were expected to align with these pillars and the board's five-year strategic plan, adopted in 2007. The result, in practical terms, was a philosophy that allowed the Foundation to support incarcerated youth and the LGBTQ+ community. The Foundation also launched an innovative community-based arts/ youth initiative called ArtReach, which it backed with nine other partner organizations from 2006 to 2013. The Foundation's support for ArtReach began with a \$1.2 million/three-year pilot and expanded to \$2.2 million by 2011, including \$1.49 million in disbursements. Between 2006 and 2011, the program funded 91 projects that reached 2,000 youth and 502 youth leaders in priority neighbourhoods across Toronto.



The 2010s: Collective impact

n 2013, Nathan Gilbert retired from his position as executive director after more than 30 years with the Foundation. The board established the Nathan Gilbert Youth Innovation Fellowship to honour his work. The following year, the Foundation hired Jehad Aliweiwi, who had served in senior leadership positions with the Canadian Arab Federation, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and Catholic Crosscultural Services, as well as a trustee on the Ontario Science Centre board.

Under Aliweiwi, the Foundation began implementing aspects of its new strategic plan, e.g., providing small pop-up grants (\$500) as a means of furthering engagement, especially among youth. At the same time, the Foundation has also moved to expand its effectiveness with a new impact

investing strategy that "allows for investment of capital for a return in investment vehicles that further our vision."

In late 2014, the Foundation also launched the Youth Collective Impact program in partnership with the McConnell Foundation's Innoweave platform. It aims to help community organizations across the province

Portrait of Executive Director, Jehad Aliweiwi in front of a streetcar at Yonge and St. Clair, ca. 2018.



develop, launch and implement collective impact initiatives that improve outcomes for youth by offering information sessions, workshops, coaching and grants.

The Foundation's seventh decade was shaped by its decision to partner with two other philanthropic organizations, the Lawson Foundation and the Counselling Foundation of Canada, in the establishment of a jointly managed shared office space that has evolved into a hub of collaborative activity for philanthropists and non-profits. Laidlaw moved into Foundation House, at St. Clair and Yonge, in 2016, after a year of planning with its partners.

The shift in location coincides with the launch of an Indigenous Engagement Strategy, a key part of the



Foundation's pledge of support for implementing the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission The strategy has four core goals: investing in young people and youth-driven groups with an intergenerational focus; supporting cross-cultural learning and the continued impact of racism and colonialism; and committing to carrying the program through to the next strategic plan cycle. Above all, the strategy is guided by Indigenous priorities and informed by Indigenous communities. In 2017, the Foundation

awarded eleven grants under this new initiative, totaling \$370,330.

Following the Foundation's decision to expand its geographic reach to all of Ontario, with a deeper emphasis on youth-led systems change, the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan will see Laidlaw focusing on under-served youth impacted by the justice, education, and child welfare systems, and redoubling the commitment to elevate their needs and amplify their voices.

Above: Attawapiskat project mural constructed in felt, ca. 2018. The mural captures the 500-year history of the Attawapiskat people from pre-Confederation to the present. It also promotes the program's key theme of respect for the land. Courtesy of Aski Kistendamon/Respecting the Land in Attawapiskat.

Below: The three Foundation House signatories, 2016. They include from left to right: Marcel Lauzière (Lawson Foundation), Jehad Aliweiwi (Laidlaw Foundation), and Bruce Lawson (The Counselling Foundation of Canada).



Feathers of Hope

n 2013, more than 100 Indigenous youth gathered in Thunder Bay to discuss the realities they face within their communities. Among the discussions arose a number of common themes (i.e. culture and identity, mental and physical health, the legacy of Residential Schools, child welfare, etc). On the final day of the Feathers of Hope forum, the young people presented their action plan for change to First Nation leadership, community organizations, service providers and provincial and federal levels of government.

The young people were given a platform to voice their experiences and recommendations to manifest hope within their communities.

The end result of the gathering was a stronger sense of hope and an ambition to advocate for themselves, their peers and their communities. Their voices and recommendations were captured in the report entitled, *Feathers of Hope: A First Nations Youth Action Plan.*

Since the first initial forum, Feathers of Hope has successfully hosted four additional forums - Child Welfare, Justice & Juries, Culture Identity & Belonging and Health & Wellbeing. An advisory committee, consisting of approximately 5-10 young people, stems from each forum hosted. The advisory committees have worked, and continue to work tirelessly on various projects they lead.

The Feathers of Hope Child Welfare advisory committee recently published, Dear Cedar: A First Nations Toolkit for understanding Ontario's child welfare system. The Culture Identity and Belonging advisory committee recently published a series of graphic novels entitled, Gentle Way of the Heart, Manidoo Makwa Spirit Bear and Blueberries Healing the Circle.

The Feathers of Hope Youth
Amplifiers refused to allow their
voices to be lost due to the closure of
the Ontario Child Advocate. In
January 2019, Feathers of Hope
became federally incorporated as a
nonprofit organization. The main
goal for this decision is to keep
encouraging and inspiring youth to be

advocates for change in their communities. Feathers of Hope allows for the safe space that these discussions can take place.

Their sole focus for this year has been to become a sustainable working non-profit organization, securing all intellectual property, finding potential partners and possible funders, as well as beginning the application process to receive a charitable status.



Members of the Feathers of Hope board of directors, 2019. From left to right: Elton Beardy, Trivena Andy, Samantha Crowe and Karla Kakegamic.

Credits

We would like to thank the National Ballet School for hosting the 70th Anniversary Gala. Laidlaw Foundation was a staunch supporter of the NBS for many decades and is pleased to celebrate this important event within their beautiful building.

The Board would also like to express its gratitude to the 70th Anniversary Committee for its role in organizing the Gala, along with all of the other initiatives undertaken to mark this important milestone.

Front Cover Images

Top: The National Ballet of Canada performing Nataraja, 1990s.

The Committee members include:

Bob Smith (President of Foundation)

Jehad Aliweiwi (Executive Director, Staff)

Rebecca Darwent (Member, Board & Committee)

Bridget Sinclair (Member, Board & Committee)

Tamer Ibrahim (Staff)

Veanna Octive (Staff)

Gohar Topchyan (Staff)

Other individuals, consultants and companies that contributed to the success of the Gala and production of this publication include:

Sandra Francescon, Event Planner, CERIC

John Lorinc, Author/Journalist (Production of the historic text)

Ellen Scheinberg, Heritage Professionals (Coordination of the booklet and other heritage products)

Rubberband Design (Designer)

Prinetics (Printer)

Bottom left: R.A. Laidlaw with Celia Franca at the opening night party for The Nutcracker at the O'Keefe Centre, 1964. Photographed by Frank Lennon. Toronto Public Library, Toronto Star Series, TSPA0048221F.

Bottom centre: Youth participants in front of the African Community Services building, 1999.

Bottom right: United Generations of Ontario intergenerational program, 1990s.



Above: Youth Collective Impact (Youth CI) Learning Circle, March 29, 2017. The Laidlaw Foundation and Innoweave brought together Youth CI collaborators from across Ontario to provide feedback on their experiences as well as share their insights related to their collective impact initiatives.

Right: Laidlaw staff and volunteers at the Youth Town Hall, May 7, 2018. The Foundation partnered with a coalition of youth to place issues pertaining to youth at the centre of the provincial election campaign. This event featured leaders from three of the four major political parties. It was attended by 300 youth from across the province who had the opportunity to engage the leaders and discuss issues that were important to them.

