

LAWSON
FOUNDATION

70 Years of
Impact

2025 | ANNUAL
REPORT



Healthy development of children and youth

Our Guiding Purpose

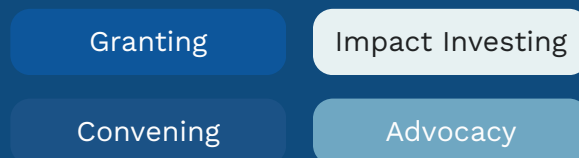
The healthy development of children and youth is essential for their present and future wellbeing and is deeply intertwined with Canada's social, economic, and environmental health.

We believe a strong relationship with nature and the land, a commitment to reconciliation, and systems that support inclusive and equitable approaches to mental and physical wellbeing are key to ensuring all children and youth can thrive.

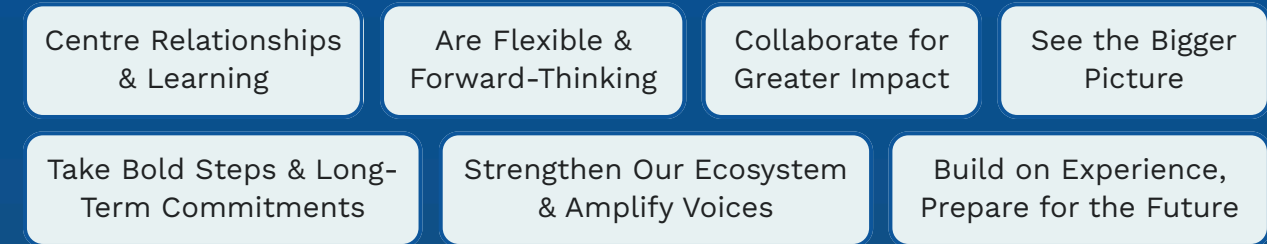
Our Mission

We invest in and engage with ideas, people and organizations that contribute to the healthy development and wellbeing of children and youth in Canada.

Our Strategic Tools



How We Engage



What & Why We Fund

Leadership: Strong leadership drives meaningful change, so we invest in people who make things happen.

Public Policy, Research & Advocacy: We invest in systemic change efforts to create large-scale, lasting benefits for communities.

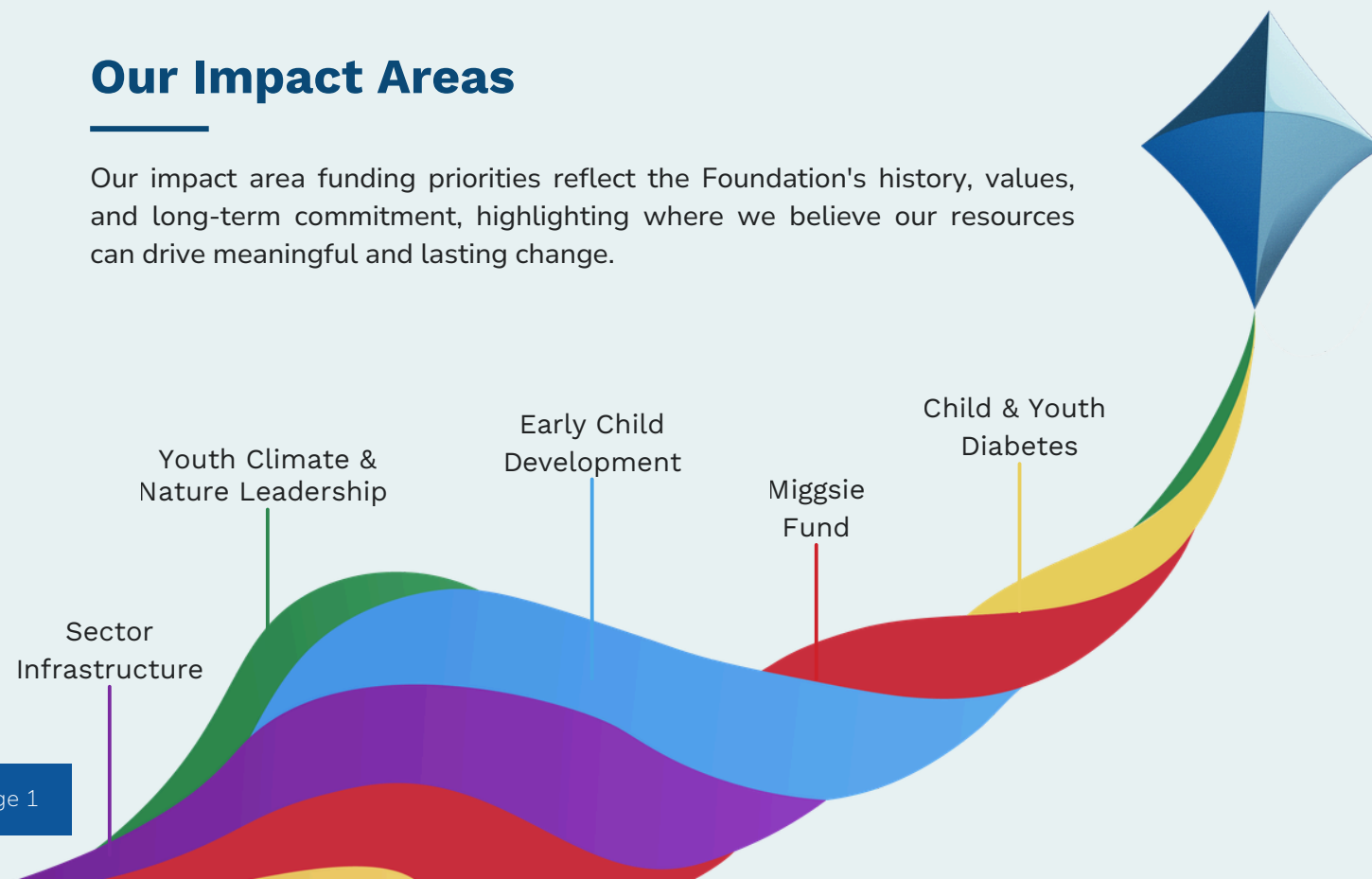
Prevention & Early Intervention: We look for upstream solutions that aim to prevent challenges before they take root.

Sector Infrastructure & Networks: We support the backbone organizations and networks that enable the charitable and nonprofit sector to thrive.

Evaluation & Knowledge Sharing: We fund research and evaluation that generates learning, builds evidence, and we share our insights openly.

Our Impact Areas

Our impact area funding priorities reflect the Foundation's history, values, and long-term commitment, highlighting where we believe our resources can drive meaningful and lasting change.



Our Commitment to Reconciliation

The Lawson Foundation is dedicated to advancing reconciliation between Canada's Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. We view this as an ongoing journey rather than a final goal. As we walk the path of reconciliation, we prioritize learning and listening, grounded in the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Alongside other philanthropic foundations, we have signed the Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action, reinforcing our commitment to fostering positive action on reconciliation through our philanthropy.

A decade later, this anniversary invites foundations and funders to reflect on what has been learned about Truth and Reconciliation in practice, and to continue evolving from intentions to concrete, long-term approaches rooted in partnership, accountability, and Indigenous-led decision-making.

To commemorate this milestone, Indigenous Community Foundations across Canada and the Lawson Foundation came together to share a reciprocity-based investment that advances Indigenous-led philanthropy. Through this partnership, all six Indigenous-led Community Foundations were provided funding to be directed as determined by Indigenous communities and the supporting Indigenous-led Foundations.

Leadership Message

HONOURING OUR ROOTS



Robin Lawson
Board Chair

When I was a child, I remember attending Foundation events with my family and feeling a profound sense of pride and responsibility. Even then, I understood that the Lawson Foundation was something special. It wasn't just an organization; it was a living expression of our family's belief that we all have a role to play in building a better future for children and youth.

This year, as I became the first 5th Gen Chair of the Foundation, I found myself reflecting on just how remarkable that journey has been.

Seventy years ago, in 1956, my great-great-grandfather, Ray Lawson, established the Foundation. Since then, each generation has contributed its own ideas, energy, and perspective while remaining grounded in a shared commitment to philanthropy. The result is not simply a legacy passed down, but a responsibility shared across generations.

One of the things that I value the most about the Lawson Foundation is that every generation has been invited to help shape its future. As young people, many of my siblings, cousins, and I cared deeply about environmental issues and wanted to see the Foundation engage in that work. Those conversations ultimately helped spark what is now our Youth Climate & Nature Leadership impact area. It is a reminder that when we create space for new voices, we create space for new possibilities.

That willingness to learn, adapt, and evolve has been part of the Foundation's story from the beginning. Over seventy years, we have grown our understanding of what creates meaningful change. We have learned from communities, partners, researchers, and young people themselves. We have embraced new ideas, strengthened old ones, and continually challenged ourselves to do better.

What has never changed is the trust that sits at the heart of our work. Trust in one another as family members and stewards. Trust in our board, committees, advisors, and staff. Trust in the organizations, leaders, and communities we support. That trust has allowed the Foundation to grow, to take risks, and to pursue opportunities that can create lasting impact.

As we look ahead, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude for everyone who has helped build this Foundation over the past seventy years. Generations of members, dedicated staff, thoughtful advisors and community partners have shaped what the Foundation is today.

I also feel excited about what comes next.

Our refreshed strategic direction reflects both where we have come from and where we hope to go. It builds on decades of learning while challenging us to continue innovating, listening, and responding to the needs of children and youth in a changing world.

The Foundation's story is still being written. I am honoured to help steward it into its next chapter, and I am optimistic about what we can accomplish together in the years ahead.



Cathy Taylor
President & CEO

The Lawson Foundation is one of the oldest and most established family foundations in Canada. As we mark our seventieth anniversary, it is a privilege to celebrate this milestone alongside Robin in her first year as Board Chair and the first 5th Gen to hold this role.

As we reflect on and honour our roots, it is amazing to reflect on how innovative, creative and generous the Foundation has been in every era – evolving over time to respond to community needs as they emerge. What strikes me most is not simply the longevity of the Foundation, but the depth of its contribution. Across generations, the Foundation has helped shape fields, advance research, influence public policy, strengthen organizations and support leaders whose work continues to benefit children, youth and communities across Canada.

Looking across our history, many principles remain evident today: investing in evidence and research, translating learning into practice, building connections, supporting emerging leaders, and investing in organizations for the long term. These lessons continue to shape how we work today, through our granting, convening, impact investing and advocacy efforts.

Our refreshed strategic direction, launched at last year's AGM, is rooted in the lessons, relationships, and experiences that have shaped the Foundation over the past seventy years. It reflects both the values that have guided our work and a renewed focus on where we believe we can have an impact. Guided by what we've learned along the way, we are sharpening our focus around the areas where our resources, relationships and expertise can drive meaningful and lasting change. We remain unwavering in our commitment to the healthy development and wellbeing of children and youth, and to the communities that support and surround them.

2025 was a year of momentum. We continued to build on the Foundation's long history of investing in communities and strengthening partnerships. We made strategic investments that allow the Foundation to grant more to communities, brought people together through convenings to share learnings and collaborate, and launched new initiatives designed to create impact well beyond the communities and organizations directly involved.

As you read this report, I hope you will see what we see: a Foundation built on a remarkable history and equipped with the relationships, knowledge, and tools to make a meaningful contribution in the years ahead.

Celebrating 70 Years of Impact

1st & 2nd Generation (1956 - 1991)

In 1956, Ray Lawson founded the Lawson Foundation as a way to enable personal giving, funded by an initial endowment of \$2 million, "to enrich the quality of life in Canada."

In 1972, Tom Lawson, Ray's son, took over leadership, maintaining a similar mission and operations, contributing personally and encouraging his wife, Miggsie, and later their children to also do so.

3rd Generation (1991 - 2003)

After Col. Tom's death, his daughter, Joan VanDuzer, a lifelong community volunteer, took the reins as the first 3rd Gen leader, formalizing the organizational structure by hiring an Executive Director, establishing an office and drafting the first written policies.

Leadership then transitioned to Joan's sister, Connie Gardiner, who guided the evolution of the Foundation's granting approach to fulfill its mission of "improving the lives of Canadians," grounded in relationship-building with experts and recipients.

4th Generation (2003 - 2025)

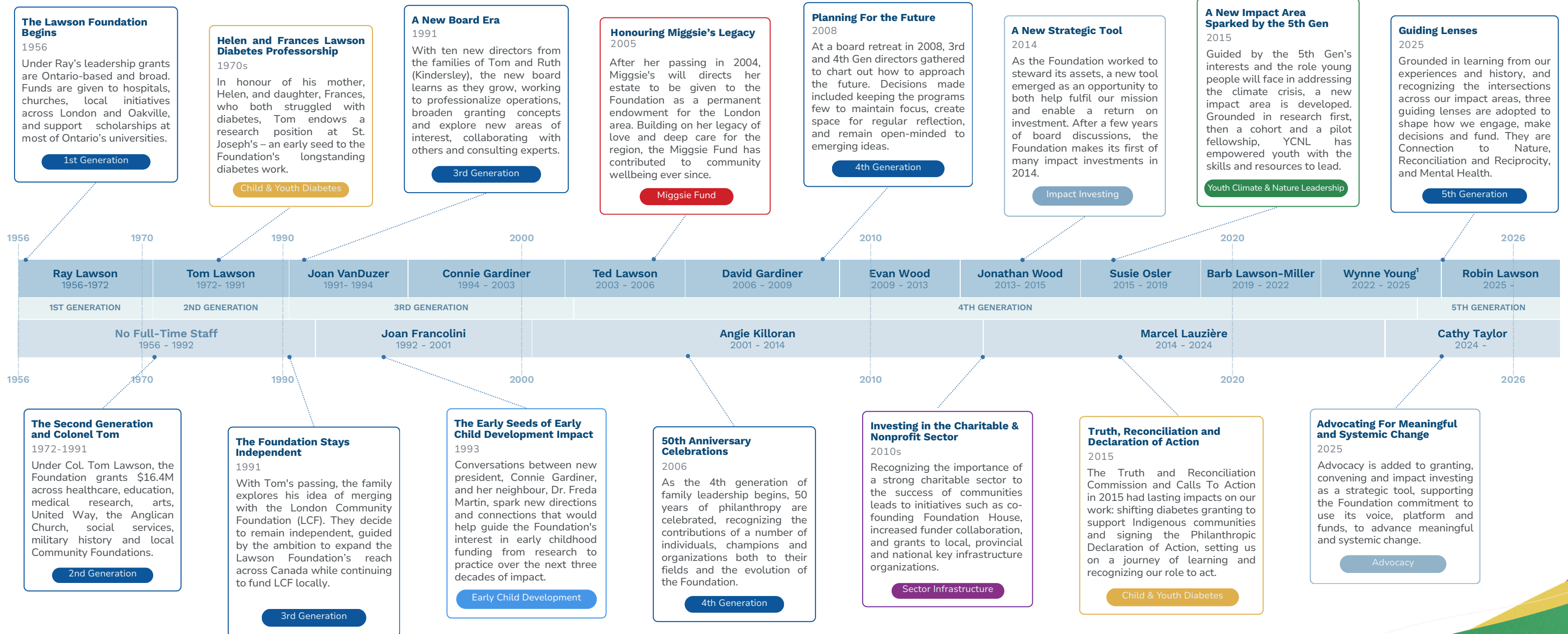
Over the next 20 years, the 4th Gen of family leadership built on past progress to guide the Foundation to where we are today.

From growing the membership and assets to strengthening governance and consolidating granting priorities, this was a time of meaningful, strategic progress. This clarity in direction and purpose led to the 2015 decision to sharpen our mission around the healthy development and wellbeing of children and youth in Canada.

5th Generation (2025 -)

In 2025, the Foundation transitioned to the 5th Gen of family leadership, reflecting the unique model of family philanthropy built over 70 years, grounded in shared values and stewardship.

This transition coincided with the adoption of a refreshed strategic direction, which reaffirmed our mission, added Advocacy as a strategic tool, and introduced cross-cutting Guiding Lenses to shape our pathways forward.



The Lawson Foundation Begins
1956
Under Ray's leadership grants are Ontario-based and broad. Funds are given to hospitals, churches, local initiatives across London and Oakville, and support scholarships at most of Ontario's universities.
1st Generation

Helen and Frances Lawson Diabetes Professorship
1970s
In honour of his mother, Helen, and daughter, Frances, who both struggled with diabetes, Tom endows a research position at St. Joseph's – an early seed to the Foundation's longstanding diabetes work.
Child & Youth Diabetes

A New Board Era
1991
With ten new directors from the families of Tom and Ruth (Kindersley), the new board learns as they grow, working to professionalize operations, broaden granting concepts and explore new areas of interest, collaborating with others and consulting experts.
3rd Generation

Honouring Miggsie's Legacy
2005
After her passing in 2004, Miggsie's will directs her estate to be given to the Foundation as a permanent endowment for the London area. Building on her legacy of love and deep care for the region, the Miggsie Fund has contributed to community wellbeing ever since.
Miggsie Fund

Planning For the Future
2008
At a board retreat in 2008, 3rd and 4th Gen directors gathered to chart out how to approach the future. Decisions made included keeping the programs few to maintain focus, create space for regular reflection, and remain open-minded to emerging ideas.
4th Generation

A New Strategic Tool
2014
As the Foundation worked to steward its assets, a new tool emerged as an opportunity to both help fulfil our mission and enable a return on investment. After a few years of board discussions, the Foundation makes its first of many impact investments in 2014.
Impact Investing

A New Impact Area Sparked by the 5th Gen
2015
Guided by the 5th Gen's interests and the role young people will face in addressing the climate crisis, a new impact area is developed. Grounded in research first, then a cohort and a pilot fellowship, YCNL has empowered youth with the skills and resources to lead.
Youth Climate & Nature Leadership

Guiding Lenses
2025
Grounded in learning from our experiences and history, and recognizing the intersections across our impact areas, three guiding lenses are adopted to shape how we engage, make decisions and fund. They are Connection to Nature, Reconciliation and Reciprocity, and Mental Health.
5th Generation

The Second Generation and Colonel Tom
1972-1991
Under Col. Tom Lawson, the Foundation grants \$16.4M across healthcare, education, medical research, arts, United Way, the Anglican Church, social services, military history and local Community Foundations.
2nd Generation

The Foundation Stays Independent
1991
With Tom's passing, the family explores his idea of merging with the London Community Foundation (LCF). They decide to remain independent, guided by the ambition to expand the Lawson Foundation's reach across Canada while continuing to fund LCF locally.
3rd Generation

The Early Seeds of Early Child Development Impact
1993
Conversations between new president, Connie Gardiner, and her neighbour, Dr. Freda Martin, spark new directions and connections that would help guide the Foundation's interest in early childhood funding from research to practice over the next three decades of impact.
Early Child Development

50th Anniversary Celebrations
2006
As the 4th generation of family leadership begins, 50 years of philanthropy are celebrated, recognizing the contributions of a number of individuals, champions and organizations both to their fields and the evolution of the Foundation.
4th Generation

Investing in the Charitable & Nonprofit Sector
2010s
Recognizing the importance of a strong charitable sector to the success of communities leads to initiatives such as co-founding Foundation House, increased funder collaboration, and grants to local, provincial and national key infrastructure organizations.
Sector Infrastructure

Truth, Reconciliation and Declaration of Action
2015
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Calls To Action in 2015 had lasting impacts on our work: shifting diabetes granting to support Indigenous communities and signing the Philanthropic Declaration of Action, setting us on a journey of learning and recognizing our role to act.
Child & Youth Diabetes

Advocating For Meaningful and Systemic Change
2025
Advocacy is added to granting, convening and impact investing as a strategic tool, supporting the Foundation commitment to use its voice, platform and funds, to advance meaningful and systemic change.
Advocacy

Family Leadership
Stewardship Generation
Staff Leadership

¹ Wynne Young served as the Foundation's first non-family Board Chair

Early Child Development

Starting With a Conversation (~1990s)

As the third generation began its stewardship of the Lawson Foundation in the 1990s, it was clear among the directors, all of whom were parents, that the wellbeing of children was of shared importance. The catalyzing spark came through personal connection and a summer of long conversations between Board President Connie Gardiner and cottage neighbour Dr. Freda Martin, a child psychiatrist whose insights, guidance, and deep connections in the field were instrumental in creating the initial early childhood grants in 1994.



Dr. Freda Martin going to visit Connie

Listening to the Experts (~1994)

Two critical connections emerged from these early conversations. Dr. Fraser Mustard helped guide the Foundation towards critical research that could then be translated into practice through sustainable community-based programs. He also brought into the fold Dr. Clyde Hertzman, a brilliant researcher exploring how early childhood experiences shape lifelong health and development. Through nearly a decade of funding for the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR), where Dr. Mustard served as president, and Dr. Hertzman led the human development program, the Foundation helped to contribute to what has since been recognized as the backbone of early child development in Canada.

Research Into Practice (1990s–2010s)

Over two decades, the Foundation's early childhood work — known at the time as the Beginning Years program — moved from exploration into community programming, parenting support, and knowledge translation resources. In total, more than \$24 million was invested over 20 years, leading to what a 2013 independent review recognized as a "game-changing impact on the field" of early child development in Canada. This included the work of our first landmark initiative, TLC³, which brought brain development science into seven communities across the country and helped establish the model for holistic, upstream child and family supports that benefit healthy child development, which are evident in today's family resource programs.

From Research To National Policy (2000s–2020s)

The Foundation's investments in research with Dr. Mustard and Dr. Hertzman helped build the scientific case for early childhood as a policy priority in Canada, contributing to a series of landmark Early Years Study reports over 25 years that built the argument for investments in early child development, including a universal, publicly funded early learning system. The Foundation also co-established the Early Child Development

Funders Working Group, a coalition that collectively took up this call. In 2021, the federal government announced the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, aimed at expanding access to licensed early learning and child care across Canada and providing public funding at lower costs for families to an average of \$10/day by 2026.

A Decade of Outdoor Play (2013)

In 2013, the Foundation began increasing children's opportunities for outdoor play. Our Outdoor Play Strategy (OPS) began with research, funding systematic reviews, a national position statement, and an open call for proposals for community projects across the country. OPS 2.0 then shifted the focus to building adult capacity to support outdoor and land-based play in early learning and child care settings. A culminating highlight: In 2024, the Canadian Paediatric Society released its own position statement on outdoor risky play, citing research, resources, and champions the Foundation had been funding over the last decade.

Where the Work is Today (2025)

The Foundation's Early Child Development impact area is now building on its extensive experience and relationships to support the expansion and quality of early learning and child care, including outdoor and land-based experiences. We are engaging in public policy discussions with our partners and working to support the integration of outdoor and land-based teaching and learning in post-secondary early childhood education programs.



Cloudberry Forest School

2025 Strategic Direction | Early Child Development

We support public policy and professional learning initiatives to build and strengthen a pan-Canadian system of Early Learning and Child Care.

Desired impact: All young children in Canada have access to high-quality, publicly funded early learning opportunities to support their healthy development

Child & Youth Diabetes

Early Roots (1970s–1990s)

In the Foundation’s early years, diabetes was one of three health streams, along with cancer and substance abuse, all of which had some deeper connections to family history. In the 1970s, the Foundation endowed the Helen and Frances Lawson Professorship in Diabetes Research. In 1996, Dr. Bob Gardiner identified gaps in Canada’s approach to diabetes prevention and care and introduced the annual Lawson Diabetes Workshop for practitioners. Over time, it became clear that Diabetes was the health stream where the Foundation could make a difference, where few other funders were working, and where its sustained investment could fill long-standing gaps.

Where We Could Make a Difference (2001–2015)

In 2001, the Foundation launched a Canada-wide Diabetes Funding Strategy, with calls for proposals to support community-based initiatives in prevention, management, and research. Over the following decade, guided by a group of diabetes advisors, nearly \$9 million was allocated to projects serving communities from urban centres to remote and northern areas, including the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project, a groundbreaking community-based initiative from the 1990s that remains part of the current cohort today. An external review in 2010–11 found that the strategy was having a real impact on the standard of care and public policy through research, and that the Foundation had been the only funder in Canada with a strategic diabetes funding program.

Launching the Child & Youth Diabetes Strategy (2015–2019)

In 2015, the Foundation renewed its focus on the healthy development of children and youth, launching the Child & Youth Diabetes Strategy (CYDS) to address the growing challenge of diabetes among children and families, prioritizing community-based interventions in high-risk populations, including Indigenous communities. That same year, the Foundation signed the philanthropic sector’s Declaration of Action — a commitment to meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous communities. Given that by the age of 20, youth in First Nations face an 80% risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes in their lifetimes, significant evidence pointed us toward Indigenous communities as the area of greatest need for support.

Spotlight on Dr. Bob Gardiner

Dr. Bob Gardiner was a leading expert on diabetes in Canada, and husband to 3rd Gen Foundation president, Connie Gardiner. He served as Director of Endocrinology at the Montreal General Hospital and later President of the Canadian Diabetes Association, driven by the need to fill gaps in the national approach to diabetes prevention, treatment and education.

Dr. Gardiner’s expertise greatly supported the growth of the Foundation’s diabetes work. He introduced the Lawson Diabetes Workshop at the annual Canadian Diabetes Association meetings, and connected the Foundation with funding applicants engaged in innovative community-based approaches to patient care.



The Area of Greatest Need (2018–2021)

As CYDS took shape, we created an advisory steering committee grounded in Indigenous expertise on diabetes, which helped reframe our strategy away from a deficit and disease approach and toward an asset-based approach centred on families, culture, and community strengths. The advice was clear: if progress was to be made, leadership needed to come from communities themselves. The culmination of this work was the first three-year CYDS cohort, which provided \$3 million, along with annual convenings, to support 10 Indigenous-led projects in community-based prevention and health promotion.

Communities Leading Their Own Work (2022–present)

The 2025 Strategic Direction sharpened our approach to funding exclusively Indigenous-led organizations and communities for diabetes prevention and management, guided by four principles: Indigenous leadership, models of Indigenous wellness, community-centred and strength-based approaches, and relationships, reciprocity, and shared learning. Additionally, our Virtual Visits series has amplified speakers with professional and lived experience in Indigenous health and wellness, and a partnership with the Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle advances public policy on diabetes prevention nationally.

2025 Strategic Direction | Child & Youth Diabetes

We support Indigenous-led organizations doing wholistic community-based work in diabetes prevention and management.

Desired impact: Children and youth in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities have access to wholistic, community-based diabetes prevention and management initiatives, reducing the incidence of type 2 diabetes.

Oskayi Kisikâw – Misipawistik Cree Nation



Youth Climate & Nature Leadership

A New Area of Interest (2015)

Our focus on youth and the environment came from our 5th Gens, who recognized the importance of a sustainable environment and the leadership role that young people can play in it. They voiced the need for action over the early 2010s, leading to the exploration of a new impact area.

Research Lays a Foundation (2015–2017)

The Foundation began by conducting research, literature reviews and focus groups, holding discussions with experts, and hosting a youth voices retreat to better understand the intersection of the environment and young people. This surfaced key insights: the 15-to-25 age range is a critical window for brain development, creativity, and innovation, which helped the Lawson Foundation shift toward strengthening youth leadership, using the environment as a lens.

Launching a National Cohort (2018–2022)

In 2018, we funded a diverse cohort of ten youth-focused environmental organizations across the country, some youth-serving, some youth-led, from land guardian programs to citizen science to climate leadership. We convened them in-person and virtually, throughout the pandemic, seeking to create a learning community. We learned about the breadth and variety of organizations working on different aspects of youth environmental leadership, from the local to the regional to the national level. From this, we learned that few funders were directly supporting young environmental leaders or specifically youth-led organizations.

Direct Support for Young Leaders (2022-2025)

With the lessons from the cohort, the Foundation began a multi-pronged approach to support young leaders directly. We launched our first-ever fellowship, a pilot that was also one of the first of its kind in the field. The Youth Action & the Environment Pilot Fellowship provided flexible funding, leadership coaching, mentorship, and wellbeing support to two classes of four young leaders each over 2 years. The fellowship recipients used these resources to advance their own environmental action projects. Evaluations showed they became more confident as leaders, and we learned how young leaders work on the ground in real time.

The Foundation also began consistent, multi-year grants to two national youth-led environmental organizations that are well placed to directly support young leaders and

Our Commitment to Climate Change

The Lawson Foundation is committed to addressing the climate crisis and recognizing its critical impact on the health and well-being of children and youth in Canada and globally. As a signatory of the Canadian Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change, we pledge to integrate climate considerations into all areas of our work. This commitment reflects our mission to support the healthy development of children and youth and aligns us with other funders dedicated to taking action on climate change.

their organizations: the Finance, Engage, Sustain (FES) and The Starfish Canada. This funding has given them the space to grow strategically and operationally, while also enabling new opportunities to address existing gaps, such as funding grassroots organizations and convening youth leaders.

Building the Field of Youth Climate & Nature Leadership (2025 to present)

As part of our Strategic Direction refresh in 2025, we clarified our focus to Youth Climate & Nature Leadership, working specifically on strengthening key "infrastructure organizations" – like FES and Starfish – that provide capacity-building, leadership development, and funding for young environmental leaders at a sector-wide level. These organizations, in turn, can better empower young people with the skills and resources needed to lead and address climate resilience and environmental action. Alongside our grant support, we also used our convening tool to bring together a broad set of youth-led, climate- and nature-focused organizations to map, evaluate and address gaps in the field and offer a shared space for relationship- and trust-building.

2025 Strategic Direction | Youth Climate & Nature Leadership

We support key infrastructure organizations to equip and empower young people to address climate change and protect our natural world.

Desired impact: Youth are empowered with the skills, resources, experiences and connections needed to lead and address climate resilience and environmental action.

Spotlight on The Youth Action & The Environment Pilot Fellowship

2025 brought the culmination of the Youth Action & the Environment Pilot Fellowship after supporting two classes of young environmental leaders with flexible financial support, leadership coaching and mentorship. It was a first for the Foundation and filled a key gap we saw in the sector.

In our first year (2022–23), we supported four fellows working across a broad range of environmental focus areas with flexible funding, leadership coaching, and mentorship. Through evaluation, we heard that fellows especially valued peer connection and wanted more in-person time together.



In our second year (2024–25), we built on this feedback. We focused the class on the intersection of environmental action and holistic health and wellbeing, began with an in-person gathering in Wendake, Quebec, and added a dedicated Wellbeing Coach alongside leadership coaching.

The fellowship journeys of each recipient were captured in a short documentary film and leadership story, which you can find here →

lawson.ca/category/youth-environment/spotlight/



Sector Infrastructure

A Long History of Strengthening Sector Infrastructure (1990s)

The Lawson Foundation has a long history of supporting the charitable and nonprofit sector. In the 1990s, the board seized the opportunity to support the nationwide community foundation movement by helping to establish the Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) by funding the salary of its first Executive Director for three years. By 1994, the Foundation had formalized this work as a named granting category — Community Foundation Development — with the stated goal of supporting “the development of the community foundation movement in Canada.”

Creating an Enabling Environment for Charities & Nonprofits (2015–present)

In 2015, we sharpened our focus on strengthening the nonprofit and charitable sector, recognizing that a well-supported sector helps all the initiatives we fund become more effective in serving their communities. Our work was grounded in the importance of cultivating an enabling environment, supported by infrastructure organizations, that ensure 1) better funding, 2) accessible research and evidence, 3) supportive public policy, and 4) opportunities for organizations to connect, learn together and share expertise.

Investing in Infrastructure Organizations (2015–2025)

Between 2015 and 2025, we supported select infrastructure organizations at the national, provincial and local levels, providing multi-year operational support to enable long-term planning, capacity-building, leadership development, and sector-wide impact.

- Imagine Canada provided national advocacy for the sector, including enabling reforms to allow charities to better influence and inform public policy.
- The Ontario Nonprofit Network helped build and strengthen nonprofit networks across Ontario and Canada while sharing resources, knowledge, and policy learning across jurisdictions and communities.
- Pillar Nonprofit Network in London strengthened nonprofit infrastructure closest to the communities we have served since the Foundation began.

Scaling our Impact Through Collaboration (2025)

Building on our decade of work supporting select infrastructure organizations, in December 2025, the Foundation launched the Charitable and Nonprofit Sector Infrastructure Collaborative Fund. Together with a growing group of funding partners and under a pooled funding model grounded in trust-based philanthropy, this initiative provides multi-year general operating support to all provincial and territorial nonprofit networks and the Canadian Federation of Nonprofit Networks. These intermediary networks strengthen the sector by establishing standards of practice, building capacity, advancing research, and engaging in cross-sectoral advocacy, yet they

have long been underfunded. The Collaborative Fund addresses this gap through a streamlined, equitable, and non-competitive approach that ensures support reaches every region of Canada.

Building Sector Knowledge and Data (2022–present)

The Charity Insights Canada Project (CICP) at Carleton University, which we helped found and continue to support, reflects our belief in the importance of data and knowledge about the sector. Since 2022, as the first national data platform for the charitable sector, CICP has provided critical overviews of trends, challenges, and opportunities to help the sector broaden its self-understanding and advocate more effectively for change and for a more enabling environment. They also translate this knowledge into training to help organizations collect, understand, and apply data in the service of their missions. Alongside data, we continue to support The Philanthropist Journal, a trusted source of analysis, ideas, and perspectives for sector leaders, funders, researchers and policymakers.

Strengthening the Social Finance Ecosystem (~2025)

Our commitment to strong sector infrastructure extends beyond the charitable and nonprofit sector to the social finance ecosystem. Social finance is a tool that can provide enhanced support to charities and nonprofits through new forms of capital and new ways to access it. Strengthening the infrastructure of the social finance ecosystem will help to unlock that catalytic capital. To do this, we have supported intermediary organizations, collaborative initiatives, and emerging approaches that help foundations and other investors use their assets for social and environmental impact.

Spotlight on Foundation House

When the Lawson Foundation moved from London to Toronto in 2014, it shared office space with the Laidlaw Foundation. That arrangement inspired a bigger vision among leaders of the two Foundations, along with the Counselling Foundation, to create a shared home for philanthropy in Canada. Over the past decade, it has grown into a hub where sector organizations work, convene, and learn together. This year, Foundation House will undergo its first renovations after a decade of strengthening and connecting the charitable and nonprofit sector.



2025 Strategic Direction | Sector Infrastructure

We support organizations that strengthen the charitable and nonprofit sector and those that contribute to building the fields in which we fund.

Desired impact: Canada has a strong, resilient charitable and nonprofit sector equipped with the resources, policy support, and collaborative networks needed to effectively serve communities and address pressing social and environmental challenges.

The Miggsie Fund

Miggsie and London

Margaret Anna Lawson (Otton), wife of Tom Lawson Sr., is fondly remembered in the London community as Magnificent Miggsie. A compassionate listener and tireless fundraiser for local causes, Miggsie was always ready to provide financial support to address community issues. She gave to food banks and neighbourhood groups, took tables at local fundraisers and filled them with friends. At her funeral in 2004, community members she had supported over the years filled the block. Her will directed that her estate be given to the Foundation as a permanent endowment for the London area. This is how the Miggsie Fund came to be.



Responding to the Needs of the Community

The Miggsie Fund honours Miggsie's love for the London area and is guided by her legacy of local philanthropy. She responded to the needs she saw around her, big or small, and the fund was built on the same principles: intentionally broad, responsive and local. For fifteen years, advisors and staff identified opportunities and directed support behind the scenes, while minimizing reporting burdens on recipients.

Broadening our Support

In 2021, after a strategic review, staff and advisors concluded the Miggsie Fund's process could be made more fair, transparent and accessible. The result was a shift to an open applications model and broadening the Fund's geographic catchment to include the additional counties and local Indigenous nations. The advisory committee was also renewed to mirror the diversity of the communities being served and bring direct awareness of local needs. In 2022, the Fund's first open call reflected the impact of these changes, leading to 22 initiatives being supported over three years.

Working Collaboratively

Collaboration and open dialogue with other funders, grantees and charitable organizations who support the community have been central to the Miggsie Fund's success. Community grants strengthen organizational capacity, while opportunity grants support initiatives in innovation and transformational systems-level change. Through the recently established London Funders Collaborative, we work alongside other funders to pool resources, maximize our impact and benefit from shared learnings. Over the years, the fund has incorporated the broader Foundation's strategy and learnings, but it has always been and remains a place-based community fund, supporting the London area in the spirit of Miggsie's giving.

2025 Strategic Direction | Miggsie Fund

Honouring Miggsie's legacy and deep care for the region, we support a range of organizations and initiatives that contribute to community wellbeing in London, Elgin and Middlesex counties, and local Indigenous nations: Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and the Munsee-Delaware Nation.

Desired impact: Organizations and leaders are better positioned to meet community needs, drive positive change and create equitable opportunities for all.

The Miggsie Fund's Impact (2004-2025)



London Children's Museum



Spotlight on Impact Investing

Leveraging Asset Stewardship

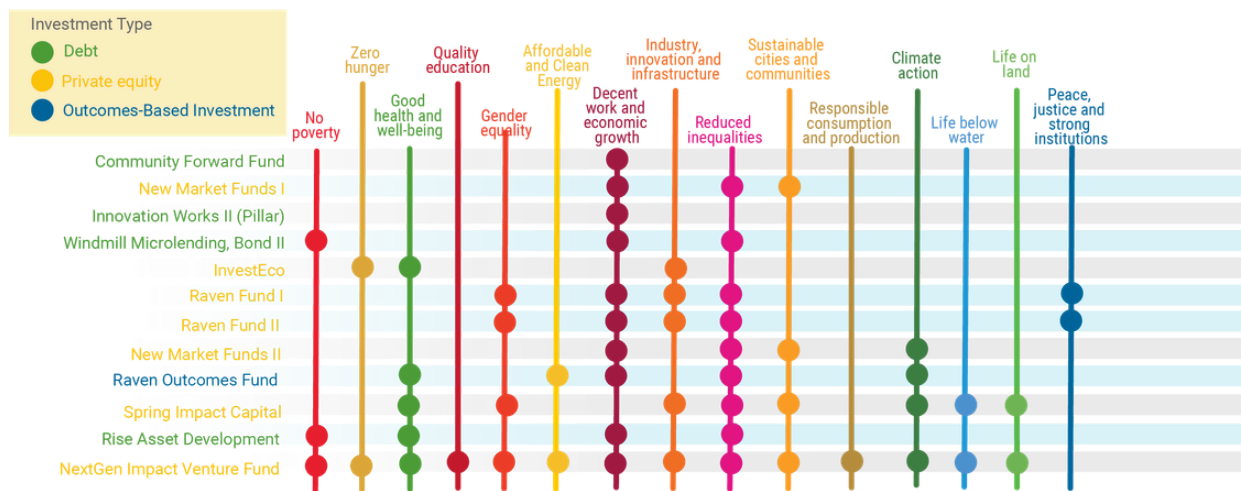
As one of the Lawson Foundation's four strategic tools, impact investing enables us to leverage the assets we steward to generate positive social and environmental impact and financial returns, while aligning investments with our mission wherever possible. We were an early adopter of impact investing within the Canadian philanthropic sector and made our first investments at the end of 2014, while committing to learning along the way.

Early Distinctions

A number of early distinctions helped guide our approach to impact investing.

1. Impact investing allowed us to expand to new areas that our members identified as important but that were not currently priorities for grantmaking. In the early years, this enabled us to invest in emerging opportunities and helped to grow the social finance market in Canada.
2. We created a dedicated Impact Investment committee, separate from the Investment Committee, to ensure a clear mandate and governance procedures.
3. We built internal expertise to source and recommend opportunities, while also engaging with other foundations to learn and impact invest together. We worked with these partners to establish the Mission-Related Investment Collaborative, a group that pursued early impact investment opportunities and still operates today under an even broader mandate, now known as Impact United.

How do the Lawson Foundation's impact investments contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals?



A Decade of Growth

Over the past 12 years, we have steadily invested over \$12 million across 21 impact investments, from sustainable agriculture to Indigenous entrepreneurship to micro-lending. The ten impact investments that have completed their terms successfully repaid their capital, with a return, enabling us to make new impact investments.

At the same time, more foundations have begun impact investing, new social finance fund managers have launched new funds and products, and the Government of Canada established the \$400 million Social Finance Fund to expand access to capital. This has enabled us to collaborate with more partners and make impact investments more closely aligned to our charitable mission and strategic priorities.

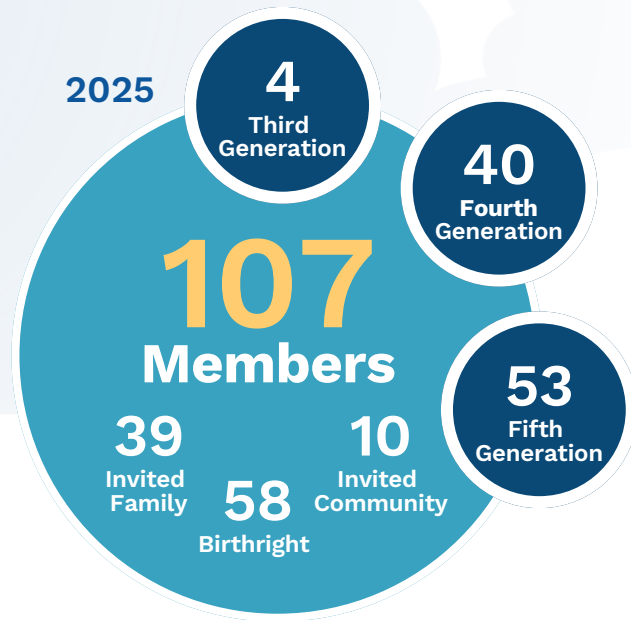
Impact Investment Commitments	
2014	\$1.5 million
2026	\$9.05 million

Investing in New Ideas

The Foundation has helped to grow social finance in Canada by investing in new ideas, new fund managers, and new partnerships, including dedicating a significant portion of our portfolio to supporting Indigenous-led social finance. The Foundation was one of the early investors in Raven Indigenous Capital Partners, who established the first Indigenous venture capital fund in North America. In 2023, the Foundation made its largest single impact investment, a \$2.5 million commitment to the Raven Indigenous Outcomes Fund, "the first impact investment to truly align with the Foundation's mission and impact area and our commitments to Reconciliation and addressing climate change," and the culmination of over six years of partnership.

Our newest impact investment is in Propel Impact's NextGen Impact Venture Fund, Canada's first and only youth-led, youth-serving impact investment fund. Propel empowers and equips the next generation of social finance leaders to deploy capital in local communities across Canada. This investment closely aligns with our mission and was recommended by the 5th Gens to honour Joan VanDuzer's legacy, a longtime champion of both young people and impact investing.

Membership



The Lawson Foundation has been and continues to be a proud member and supporter of the following sector networks and capacity-building organizations:



2025 Financial Highlights

Investment in Communities in 2025	
Granting	\$6,221,666
Convening & Programming	\$562,603
Impact Investment Commitments (net asset values + undeployed commitments)	\$6,750,204
Total Community Investment	\$13,534,473

2025 Audited Financial Statements are available on the [Foundation's website](#).

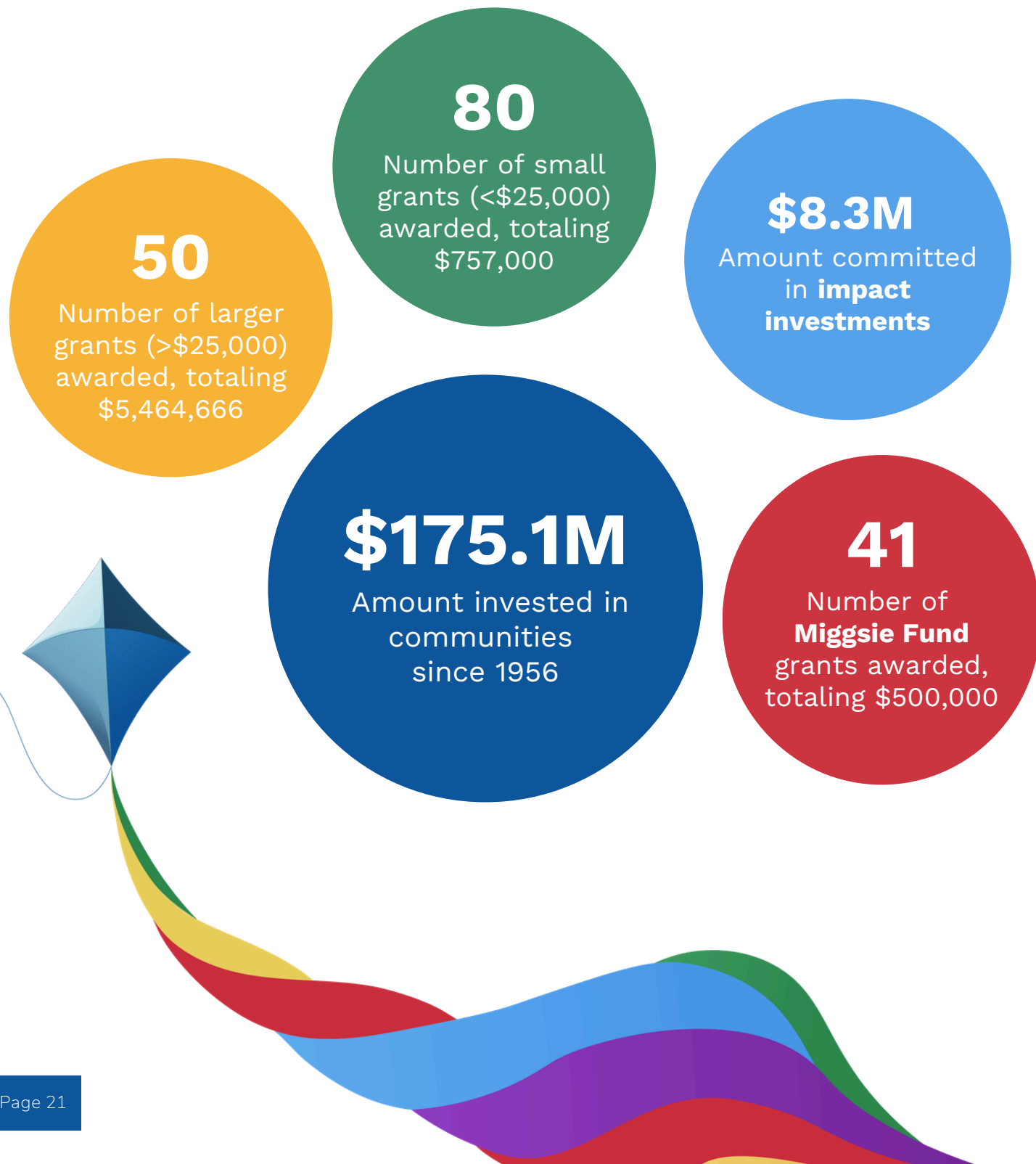


Cloudberry Forest School



2025 Granting Highlights

Our work as a Foundation impacts communities across Canada. Here are a few highlights that help to paint a picture of our impact over the past year.



Our Team

From our board of directors to our standing committees, from our volunteers to our staff, people are at the heart of our philanthropy. We'd like to recognize and thank the following individuals for their contributions to the Foundation in 2025

Board of Directors

- Wynne Young – *Chair**
- Robin Lawson – *Chair***
- Holly Henning Wood – *Vice Chair***
- Tim Gardiner – *Vice Chair**
- Vijay Venkatesan – *Chair, Audit & Finance*
- Connie Wansbrough – *Director***
- Erin Grace – *Director*
- Jean-Marc Chouinard – *Director***
- Lauren Lawson – *Director*
- Michelle Chui – *Director*
- Wanda Brascoupé – *Director*

Audit Committee

- Vijay Venkatesan – *Chair*
- Andrew Gardiner**
- Ashton Cross
- Dave Gardiner
- Holly Henning Wood
- John Callaghan*
- Lawson Cross
- Phoenix Wood**
- Robin Lawson**
- Wynne Young*

Governance Committee

- Michelle Chui – *Chair*
- Alexander Wood
- Chris Snook
- Claire VanDuzer*
- Erin Grace
- Evan Wood
- James Wood**
- Jessica Gardiner
- Kayla Cross**
- Lauren Lawson
- Raegan Kennedy
- Robin Lawson**
- Wanda Brascoupé
- Wynne Young*

Investment Committee

- Tim Gardiner – *Chair*
- Aidan Wood
- Anish Chopra
- Andrew Gardiner
- Charles Wood
- Erin Grace
- George Gardiner
- Harrison Wood
- Holly Henning Wood
- Justin Wood
- Robin Lawson**
- Ted Lawson
- Vijay Venkatesan
- Wynne Young*

Impact Investment Committee

- Anish Chopra – *Chair*
- Ashton Cross**
- Chris Osler
- Connie Wansbrough**
- Doug Grace**
- Erica Barbosa
- Gwyn Wansbrough
- Heather Moore
- Lawson Cross
- Liam Wood
- Machenzie Lawson**
- Robin Lawson
- Ted Lawson**
- Tristan Smyth**
- Wanda Brascoupé
- Wynne Young*

Advisors - Miggsie Fund

- Barb Lawson
- Chris Patriquin
- Gloria Rolfe

Advisors - YCNL

- Alyssa Obrand
- Kyle Empringham
- Manvi Bhalla
- Sara Adams
- Serena Mendizábal

Staff

- Allison Tse
Director, Youth Climate & Nature Leadership & Manager, Social Finance
- Amanda Mayer
COO & Director, Sector Infrastructure & Social Finance
- Cathy Taylor
President & CEO
- Christine Alden
Director, Early Child Development
- Jeff LaPlante
Director, Child & Youth Diabetes
- Karen Pischedda
Director, Miggsie Fund & Manager, Grants
- Nayan Datta Biswas
Coordinator, Operations & Governance
- Shared Foundation House Staff**
- Angella Reid
Events Coordinator & Office Assistant
- Simran Gill***
IT Support Specialist
- Neus Gilvonio***
Technology Services Coordinator

* Board or committee term or officer position ended in June 2025

** Board, chair or committee term or officer position started in June 2025

*** Left the organization in 2024 or joined the organization in 2025

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