



Insights and Encounters

September 2026

Volume 4 - Issue 8

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Catholic Charities Invests in Tomorrow's Leaders
- Catholic Community Services of York Region: Building Belonging Through Creativity
- Deaf Services Canada: International Week of Deaf People (IWDP)
- Saint Elizabeth Foundation: Walking Together Toward Reconciliation
- ShareLife: Putting Faith into Action Through Food Security Grants

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto provides leadership, supports social services, and facilitates advocacy for its member agencies and the people they serve. At its core is Catholic Social Teaching that focuses on the poor and marginalized, urging us all to build a just society and safeguard the dignity of every person.

VOLUNTEER
with us at
**SYNERGY
TORONTO
2026**

Be part of something big!
This November, hundreds of leaders from across Catholic health, education, and community services are coming together in Toronto and we want you to be part of making it happen.

VOLUNTEER SIGN-UPS ARE NOW OPEN!
PLEASE SEND YOUR INQUIRIES TO:
hkandiah@ccat.ca

THERE'S A ROLE FOR EVERYONE.
From registration and hospitality to logistics and media.

*Together, we create change.
Together, we build hope.*

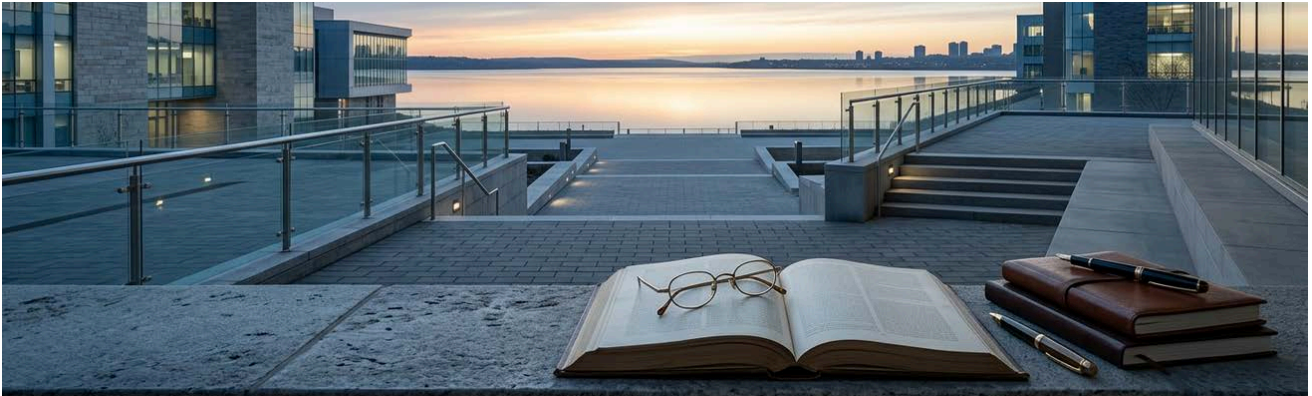
**SYNERGY
TORONTO 2026
CONFERENCE**
November 3 – 5, 2026
**Chelsea Hotel
Toronto, ON**

**Your Three Days
Are Taking Shape.**

Day 1: Connect
Day 2: Explore
Day 3: Act

Register today!
www.SynergyTO2026.ca

Catholic Charities Invests in Tomorrow's Community Leaders



Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto (CCAT) is proud to recognize the recipients of its 2026 Scholarships and Awards Program. Through nearly \$50,000 in scholarships, bursaries and community service awards, CCAT continues to invest in individuals whose commitment to education, service and leadership reflects the values at the heart of our mission.

These awards help remove financial barriers to learning while encouraging recipients to make meaningful contributions within their professions, communities and fields of service. This year's recipients represent a broad range of educational pathways, career aspirations, and volunteer experiences, demonstrating how education and service can create lasting impact for individuals, families, and communities.

From social work and healthcare to Indigenous youth leadership and lifelong learning, this year's recipients reflect a shared commitment to building a more compassionate, inclusive and caring society. Their achievements demonstrate the importance of investing in emerging leaders whose talents, dedication and service will benefit communities across the Archdiocese and beyond for years to come.

In December, Catholic Charities will host its annual Mass of Thanksgiving to honour its volunteers and member agencies. The evening will also include the Scholarship & Awards Reception, bringing together recipients, volunteers, donors, and supporters to recognize achievement and celebrate the opportunities made possible through these awards.

Most Reverend Bishop Robert Kasun will join scholarship recipients, donors and supporters at the reception to recognize this year's award winners and their exceptional achievements and contributions.

CCAT's 2026 Scholarship, Awards & Bursary Recipients

Join Us in Congratulating Our 2026 Recipients!

Cardinal Collins Palliative Care & Gerontology Scholarship:

Nitha Reno

Indigenous Community Youth Leadership Scholarship

Drea Sinclair

Fr. Paul Lennon/Doreen Cullen Social Work Scholarship

Amber Culley

Jorge Rodriguez

Lifelong Learner Scholarship

Amanda Klages

Sisters of Service Scholarship

Alonso Del Villar

Ana Ulloa



Amanda Klages

Ana Ulloa

Drea Sinclair

**Nitha
Reno**

Michael Fullan Community Service Awards

- Anastasiia Danylchenko
- Emily Hospedales
- Mihret Tekle

Pantaleo Family Bursary

- Ana R.
- Russel E.
- Cleopatra O.
- Joylynn P.

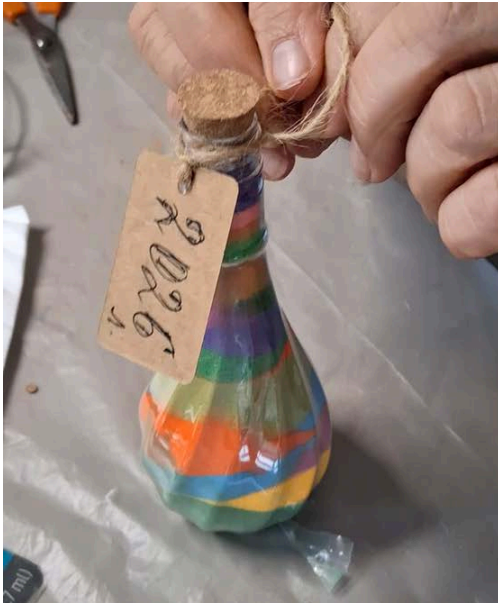
Congratulations once again to all of our 2026 recipients. Their achievements highlight the transformative power of education, service and community support. We look forward to welcoming a new group of applicants in 2027 and continuing to invest in future students, leaders and community builders.

Learn more about CCAT's Scholarships and Awards Program by visiting the Scholarships and Awards page on our website. <https://ccat.ca/scholarships-and-awards/>



Building Belonging Through Creativity: Seniors' Art Activity Group

Catholic Community Services of York Region



At Catholic Community Services of York Region, we know that building genuine connection between people is one of the most meaningful things a community program can do — and that's exactly what's happening at our new Seniors' Art Activity Group at Fairy Lake Gardens in Newmarket.

In partnership with York Region Housing, and funded by CCAT, a ShareLife partner, this program brings creative programming directly into the community where seniors live. Two months in, participants have already explored glass painting, mosaic art, acrylic painting, texture paste techniques, and more — a new project and new skill every week.

But the real story isn't just the art. It's the conversation, the laughter, and the friendships formed along the way. Engagement has been so strong that no one has missed a single class.

As one participant shared: "The classes are not only about making art. We talk, laugh, share stories, and enjoy being together. I leave my problems behind the door for two hours every Monday." Another person added: "Every week I was curious about what we would make next... I didn't want the classes to end!"

This is only the beginning. We're grateful to York Region Housing, CCAT, and ShareLife for helping bring this program to life — and excited for where this creative journey goes from here.



International Week of Deaf People (IWDP)

Deaf Services Canada



Deaf Services Canada stands with the World Federation of the Deaf and many organizations for and by Deaf community members worldwide during **International Week of Deaf People (IWDP)**, September 21-27, 2026. Our Annual General Meeting is being held on September 22, over Zoom, at 7:00 p.m. On September 26, we are hosting our fourth annual community BBQ – an afternoon of connections, activities, games, and food, free to the community! Visit www.deafservices.ca to find out more, register, and join us!

This year marks 20 years of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the recognition of national signed languages as full and equal languages. Twenty years later, we still need to affirm our commitment to Deaf people's human rights and language rights. This requires recognition, commitment, and concrete implementation to ensure full access through signed languages. Cool fact: in Canada, there are many signed languages used – American Sign Language (ASL), la langue des signes québécoise (Quebec Sign Language – LSQ), Maritime Sign Language and many other dialects across the country, and countless Indigenous Signed Languages.

The IWDP Theme for 2026 is Declaring Deaf People's Human Rights

At Deaf Services Canada, Deaf people are at the centre of decisions that affect the community: what we do; our programs, services, and resources; our policies; our leadership; and our efforts to advance the language rights of Deaf seniors, adults, youth, children, infants, and their families.

Deaf people are part of vibrant linguistic and cultural communities. Promoting signed languages also means protecting Deaf cultural and human dignity, a fundamental principle of Catholic Social Teaching. Happy IWDP!



Saint Elizabeth
Foundation

Walking Together Toward Reconciliation

Saint Elizabeth Foundation



As we approach the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Saint Elizabeth Foundation continues to reflect on the importance of listening, learning, and building meaningful relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities, and on our shared responsibility to honour their experiences.

For over 25 years, our First Nations, Inuit and Metis (FNIM) Program has worked alongside Indigenous communities to co-develop community-driven, culturally safe initiatives, education, resources, and tools. Through collaboration and knowledge sharing, the programs work to improve access to care, address barriers, and support health and wellbeing solutions that reflect the communities' priorities and strengths.

This work reflects the long-standing commitment to putting the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission into practice. Through education and meaningful relationship-building, the FNIM Program supports individuals and organizations to take meaningful steps toward reconciliation within healthcare.

This commitment also extends to Journey Home Hospice. The FNIM Program works closely with Journey Home Hospice to collaboratively share knowledge and support healthcare professionals providing end-of-life care within Indigenous communities. Consultations can help expand access to education and resources for community healthcare providers, build capacity, and advance culturally safer care. These relationships demonstrate that reconciliation is an ongoing commitment to listening, learning, collaboration, and meaningful action.

To learn more about the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Program and how its work advances greater equity and culturally safe care while ensuring Indigenous voices, knowledge, and experiences remain at the centre of their work, please visit: <https://fnim.sehc.com/>



Putting Faith into Action Through Food Security Grants

ShareLife



When a neighbour is struggling to put food on the table, our faith calls us to respond with compassion.

In 2023, as food insecurity reached alarming levels across our communities, ShareLife and its Catholic partners launched the Food Security Grants program. The program helped local parishes, agencies and community organizations provide food and practical support close to home.

The need did not go away. So neither did the response.

The program continued to grow in 2024 and 2025, supporting more food banks, meal programs and community organizations caring for people facing hunger.

In 2026, ShareLife and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto are committing \$850,000 through the Food Security Grants program. This support will help parish, agency and community-based food programs across the Archdiocese of Toronto.

The need remains significant. In 2024, Toronto food banks recorded more than 4.1 million visits, a 340% increase since 2019. More than one in ten Torontonians now relies on food banks, including people who are working but still struggling to afford enough food.

Behind every number is a person: a parent trying to feed their children, a neighbour going without a meal or a family facing impossible choices.

For 50 years, ShareLife supporters have helped respond to changing needs across our communities. Through their faithful support, local programs can continue caring for our brothers and sisters in need with dignity and compassion.



IN OUR OWN WORDS

Drea Sinclair

2026 Recipient

Indigenous Youth Community Leader Scholarship

Hello! My name is Drea Sinclair, and I am a student at Lakehead University starting the Master of Social Work program.

I am beyond grateful to be a recipient of the Indigenous Youth Leadership Scholarship for 2026. This scholarship will support me throughout my program, easing financial barriers and stressors and allowing me to focus on my studies.

I am very passionate about First Nations mental health in remote communities, which will be the focus of my work in my program. I plan to work with Indigenous youth to research mental health services and cultural knowledge in remote communities and improve their accessibility as a protective factor against suicide. Suicide has affected me as I have lost three friends to suicide, and I wish to honour them by working towards helping those who struggle with mental health and addictions, especially in remote communities where accessibility to services is limited.

I also want to continue my academic journey and earn a PhD in Social Work, not only to support Indigenous youth, but to be a role model and encourage them to reach their goals. Once again, I am very grateful for this scholarship and for the support towards my education. I am excited to work towards a career in supporting others, advocating for reconciliation, and uplifting First Nation communities.

Chii-miigwetch!

PAUSE & REFLECT

The Language of the Heart

By Dr. Agnes Thomas

Communication, Belonging, and the Art of Understanding

A backyard disagreement with my teenage son and a visit to an organization serving Deaf people inspired me to reflect this month on communication. Both experiences reminded me to think about the intentionality behind communication beyond the words themselves, especially in the era of flash communication.

In the first experience, my teenage son and I sat in the backyard discussing our plants when I admired the new flowers on my bean vine.

“They look perfect,” I said.

He immediately asked, “How do you know they are perfect? What does perfect mean?”

I tried to explain that it looked healthy and, therefore, was likely to yield a good bunch of beans. He shook his head and said that was not what made a flower perfect, then began explaining stamens, carpels, and other botanical details that meant very little to me. We spent nearly twenty minutes debating the merits of a perfect flower. Neither of us could convince the other, and we reluctantly agreed that both views had value.

As he went to inspect the flowers on his tomato plant, I stayed on the bench, wondering why such a simple exchange had turned into an argument. We were looking at the same flower, yet we used different standards and language to describe what we saw. The scientific perspective on blossoms sounds correct, and so do my observations and personal experience growing plants.

Neither of us was necessarily wrong, but we were so focused on explaining why each of us was right that we didn't first try to understand what the other meant. The conversation left me with a broader question: how often do disagreements and misunderstandings arise not from any intent to harm or provoke conflict, but from attaching different experiences and meanings to the same words?

A few days later, I visited [Deaf Services Canada](#), where staff explained the various ways people use and access language and speech. Staff discussed different tools and sign languages used to communicate and access information. They also showed how thoughtful choices in language, visual cues, technology, and physical spaces can either open a conversation or exclude someone from it.

The visit brought me back to the conversation with my son. Two people who share a language and an everyday life understood the same subject very differently; What, then, does communication require when people do not share the same spoken language, cultural assumptions, beliefs, or ways of accessing language?



This requires us to recognize how differently people understand, experience, and access language. In the wider world, intentional communication must bridge differences in age, experience, culture, ability, and access.

Are we being mindful and open to such possibilities in our day-to-day interactions and decision-making?

Together, these encounters led me to question not only our spoken words but also what our communication makes possible. Does it recognize the other person's experience? Does it remove barriers? Does it build belonging or deepen distance?

The language of the heart recognizes that others may see and experience the world differently than we do. It seeks to welcome rather than judge, and to listen before responding. As St. Paul teaches, even the gift of language is empty when it is not grounded in love.

What language, then, do we choose to speak?

Our experiences and circumstances shape the language we use and the meanings we attach to it. That is why listening without judgment matters.

My son taught me to look at the flower through a scientific lens, while I invited him to value observation and experience. In the end, it was not about who was right. We both agreed that understanding requires openness, curiosity, and the grace to pause. Sometimes it calls for patience; other times, deliberate effort. It is a choice: to become people others feel safe enough with to communicate differently, ask for clarification, or simply be understood on their own terms.

We live with the possibilities of our hearts and our imaginations. Together, they offer the potential to grow, find life, and give life through the language of love and life.

The words we choose, their meaning, our tone, and even our body language shape how others receive us. Communication, then, is not simply about being understood. It is also about making room to understand.

-Originally published in <https://lightoftruth.in>



ON THE HORIZON



ShareLife 50th Anniversary Open House at St. Augustine's Seminary

Tour the seminary and meet the agencies your
kindness supports!

Saturday, October 3, 2026
Doors will be open from
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

2661 Kingston Rd, Scarborough,
ON M1M 1M3
Please register at sharelife.org/50

Celebrate 50 years of ShareLife: Open House at St. Augustine's Seminary on October 3rd

Behind 50 years of ShareLife are people like you, whose kindness has touched countless lives. As we continue celebrating this milestone, we invite you to see that kindness at work.

Join us on Saturday, October 3, for a special ShareLife Open House at St. Augustine's Seminary. Doors will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tour the seminary, meet representatives from ShareLife-funded agencies, and discover how your support makes a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters in need. Come see the people and places behind the mission you make possible.

Bring your family and friends. We look forward to welcoming you!

ON THE HORIZON



SYNERGY TORONTO 2026 CONFERENCE

TOGETHER IN FAITH. UNITED IN SERVICE.

Join Catholic leaders and professionals
from health care, education, and community
services for three days of inspiration,
learning, and collaboration.

November 3-5, 2026 | Toronto

Together, we are stronger.

Register Today: www.SynergyTO2026.ca

Sponsored By



SE Foundation



Sisters of St. Joseph
of Toronto



Congregation of Jesus
/ Loretto Sister



Ecclesiastical Insurance



Toronto Catholic
Principals' & Vice-Principals'
Association



University of
St. Michael's
College



Catholic
Children's Aid
FOUNDATION



Catholic Health
Association of Ontario

Media Sponsors



THE CATHOLIC REGISTER



Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto

How you can contact member agencies and affiliated agencies of Catholic Charities

MEMBER AGENCIES

COMMUNITY/FAMILY SERVICES

Catholic Community Services of York Region
1-800-263-2075
www.ccsyr.org

Catholic Crosscultural Services
416-757-7010
www.cathcrosscultural.org

Catholic Family Services of Durham
1-877-282-8932
www.cfsdurham.com

Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin
905-450-1608
www.cfspd.com

Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County
1-800-726-2503
www.cfssc.ca

Catholic Family Services of Toronto
416-921-1163
www.cfstoronto.com

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Deaf Services Canada
416-463-1104
www.deafservices.ca

Mary Centre
416-630-5533
www.marycentre.com

Saint Elizabeth Health Care
905-940-9655
www.sehc.com

St. Bernadette's Family Resource Centre
416-654-9810
www.stbernadettesfrc.org

St. Michael's Homes
(Our Place Community of Hope Program)
416-926-8267
www.stmichaelshomes.org

SENIORS

Centres d'Accueil Héritage (CAH)
416-365-3350
www.caheritage.org

LA Centre for Active Seniors
416-452-4875
www.lacentreforseniors.ca

Houses of Providence
(Unity Health Toronto)
416-285-3666
www.providence.on.ca

Society of Sharing
416-413-0380
www.societyofsharing.org

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto
416-395-1500
www.torontoccas.ca

Covenant House Toronto
1-800-465-7308
www.covenanthousetoronto.ca

YOUNG PARENTS

Rosalie Hall
416-438-6880
www.rosaliehall.com

Rose of Durham
(Young Parents Division of CFS Durham)
905-432-3622
www.roseofdurham.com

Rose of Sharon
905-853-5514
www.roseofsharon.com

Vita Centre
905-502-7933
www.vitacentre.org

AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Birthright International
1-800-550-4900
www.birthright.org

Good Shepherd Ministries
416-869-3619
www.goodshepherd.ca

Natural Family Planning Association
437-600-9333
www.naturalfamilyplanningtoronto.ca

**St. Marguerite Bourgeoys
FertilityCare Toronto**
416-465-2868
www.fertilitycare.ca

Society of St. Vincent de Paul
(Camp Ozanam)
416-364-5577
info@ssvptoronto.ca

**To learn more about
Catholic Charities, go to:**

www.ccat.ca



Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto

1155 Yonge Street, Suite #400
Toronto, Ontario M4T 1W2
Executive Director: Agnes Thomas
T: 416-934-3401
E: info@ccat.ca
www.ccat.ca
Charitable Registration No. 10687 9943 RR0001



Catholic Charities of the
Archdiocese of Toronto



Catholic Charities of the
Archdiocese of Toronto



@catholiccharitiesontario



@CharitiesCares