



SEVEN OAKS SOUTH
EDUCATION FOUNDATION INC.

Foundation

N E W S

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Garry Alejo

Connecting Communities, Supporting People



There's an often-told saying: "There are those who speak and those who do." When it comes to community, Garry Alejo is most certainly one of those who do.

Even before Garry and his family migrated from the Philippines to Canada in 2014, he had organized numerous medical and dental missions in support of those of need. He carried that spirit of community service with him here in Winnipeg where he now lent his support to the Bear Clan Patrol, first by printing their badges and then walking alongside them in North End and West Broadway neighbourhoods.

In 2021, when the Tyndall Park area reached out to the Bear Clan Patrol because of an increase in vandalism and break-ins, Garry stepped up with an idea of his own.

"I was so inspired by the Bear Clan and the tremendous work they do, I decided to develop a similar initiative for the area called Northwest Watchers," says Garry. "I originally hoped perhaps we could be part of the Bear Clan, but because [the Bear Clan] is specifically Indigenous-led, we needed to find a different way to work together."

Over the next seven months, Garry prepared a memorandum of understanding with the Bear Clan Patrol to create a stand-alone chapter that does not receive monetary support from the Bear Clan.

"The Northwest Watchers are 100% independent, but they are an official associate chapter," explains Garry. "In 2022, we began patrolling every Wednesday... Gilbert Park, Shaughnessy Heights, Waterford, Castlebury and Meadows West, where I live."

"We now patrol all the way to Elwick, which is basically half of the Maples. I actually sit as a director of the Tyndall Park Community Centre, in return for having a room for our Bear Clan Chapter."

Creating Programs, Helping People

The Northwest Watchers do more than patrol their community. The organization started a project called “Bundle Up,” where winter clothing donated by individuals and businesses are collected and distributed to people to ensure they have the right clothing to help them stay warm during cold Winnipeg winters. Garry also spearheaded the “Clothe the Community” program where the Northwest Watchers partner with other organizations to secure a location and provide free clothing options to all.

“We’ve had three Clothe the Community events, in Gilbert Park, Elwick and Shaughnessy Park,” says Garry. “All people are welcome – anyone with a need.”

In 2023, Garry launched a project of his own to support students: Project Back to School.

“Basically, I collected school supplies the Project gives to organizations that are connected to schools,” says Garry. “Last year, I connected with RBC and BMO to help support the idea.”

“I bought 180 backpacks, filled them with supplies and distributed them to social workers who identified the children who needed them. Then principals of schools gave them out. Some were even sent up north with organizations who work up there.”

Getting On Board(s)

As Project Back to School gained the attention of others in his community, a number of organizations reached out to bring Garry into their fold. In 2024, the Philippine Heritage Council elected him as a Director and invited him to co-chair the first-ever sharing circle with Indigenous people.

“I got an Elder to do the sharing circle, and the event was really successful,” says Garry. “In fact, we’re doing it again this year. And I’ve also been organizing other cultural exchanges with Indigenous and Filipino guests sharing each other’s music and arts.”

In 2024, Garry was also appointed as a Director the Philippine Canadian Centre of Manitoba. In part of his acceptance of the role, Garry insisted that events at the Centre be open to all people – especially Indigenous peoples.

“What I want is to create projects that have never been done by Filipino organizations. Things that really bring communities together in different ways,” explains Garry. “It’s time for us to educate our community about Indigenous people and culture. After all, they were the first people who lived in this land.

“I did my very first event – a free Breakfast with Santa – last December. It was actually the first time in 25 years the event had been in the Centre. I connected with my friends and got sponsorships from MacDonald’s, I-Hop, BMO, RBC. We had breakfast and also had a free raffle with unwrapped gifts that people could choose from. It was huge!”

Finding the Foundation

Given his spirit of volunteerism and dedication to the community, it’s no surprise that when Garry’s friend, Ernesto Ofiaza asked him to join the Seven Oaks Education Foundation Board (SOEF), Garry leapt at the opportunity.

“Ernesto invited me to join the board because I’m connected with both the Indigenous and the Philippine communities,” says Garry. “I value those kinds of relationships with the community. They know me personally and what I’ve done. I try to bring these kinds of connections into the Seven Oaks School Division.”

“I want to take the Board to another level of fundraising. I want to keep businesses aware that we’re supporting the schools and that they can support us. I believe we can get more corporate funding and sponsorship.”

Garry has already been speaking to some of his connections to get permission for an SOEF fundraising campaign to sell tickets at a Jets or Bombers game. He's also been reaching out to local businesses to get them involved.

But Garry doesn't want only the adults to support fundraising for SOEF. He feels it's important to get youth active in supporting their communities and schools as well.

"I want the youth to be involved because I want them to realize it's important to give back to the community so the cycle goes on."

"You never know; one day, a student you helped might show up and say they want to help out on the Board, too!"



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