

# Change Starts Here

New Dawn  
**Youth & Family**  
Centre





# DISTRICT MAP OF GLACE BAY

—SCALE 1 MILE TO 1 INCH—



FEBRUARY 1928

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## Dear Friends,

There are children in our community who wake each morning carrying more than their share. They carry the weight of overburdened parents, of cupboards gone bare, of streets that don't feel safe. They carry questions about their worth, their place, their future.

And yet—they carry light too. In their drawings, their music, their questions, their laughter, there is an enduring brilliance. There is beauty. There is so much more than the world has made room for. The New Dawn Youth & Family Centre is a collective effort to reflect and amplify that light.

It is a place built on the belief that every child is gifted, and that our job as a community is not to fix them—but to see them, to know them, to love them. It is a place where no child will be made to feel small for being poor, isolated, different, afraid, behind.

Here, love is not abstract. It's found in open doors that never slam shut, warm suppers that fill belly and soul, and creative expression that stains fingers with paint and possibility.

For generations, Glace Bay has lived with the long echo of economic collapse—of mines closed, families fractured, addiction filling in the cracks. Too many of our young people have come of age surrounded by the message that they don't matter.

At New Dawn, we've never waited for permission to build a better future. New Dawn has always believed that community is built through courage, care, honesty, and action. We have built housing, cared for our elderly, nurtured the arts, seeded conversations and gardens, made room. This Youth & Family Centre is the next chapter.


And we cannot do it alone.

We are asking you—our neighbours, our partners, our kindred dreamers—to stand with us. To believe, as we do, that there is no such thing as a lost cause. That love, when organized and made visible and resolute, can change everything.

Help us build this place. Not just with steel, wood and concrete but with tenderness. With the kind of fierce love that says to a child: you matter, you are home. Will you stand with the young people of Glace Bay as they build something big, something bold, something beautiful, something truly their own?

With gratitude,

**Erika Shea**  
CEO/President  
New Dawn



# Generational Change Starts at Home

## A Proud Past

From the early establishment of one of Canada's strongest unions, to the fateful strike that led to the death of miner William Davis and the establishment of William Davis Miners' Memorial Day, Glace Bay is a town that's seen plenty of ups and downs.

It's also the sort of place where everyone has parents or grandparents that worked underground or on the water, supporting families and neighbours through generations. A town where resilience is every bit as abundant as the coal in the bedrock below.

## A Challenging Present

As the mines closed and the fishery withered, like once vibrant industrial towns across North America, unemployment, generational poverty, and a growing reliance on substances to help cope with it all, emerged.

Today:

- Over 40% of Glace Bay's children live below the poverty line
- 50% of the town's young adults are considered problem drinkers
- Glace Bay's needle exchange distribution rate is 400% above the provincial average
- More than 20% of the town faces unemployment

Through it all, Glace Bay draws on a legacy of hope, hard work, and caring for each other. This is a town that knows how to lace up work boots, rise above the challenges, and find collective solutions that strengthen the community.



Photo: Shedden Studios





**My hope is that the new Centre becomes a safe and healthy space for everyone, and that we make every single person feel welcome into our space.**



# Robbie's Hope for the Future

For Robbie Metcalfe, Glace Bay is more than home, it's the place his entire family has lived out their lives for generations. At twenty years old, he knows the town's challenges, but he also sees its potential. For him, the New Dawn Youth & Family Centre will go a long way to reaffirming the town's sense of being a close-knit family.

"I'm happy to see where the community is going compared to where it was at," Robbie says. "I feel that Glace Bay has a bright future and that it will thrive to be so much more."

As a part-time staff member at Undercurrent Youth Centre, he believes deeply in what the promise of the expanded New Dawn Youth & Family Centre will offer. Now, as design turns to construction, he feels it's going to be "fantastic", thanks to what he calls "the best team of people making it the best it can be."

According to Robbie, "My hope is that the new Centre becomes a safe and healthy space for everyone, and that we make every single person feel welcome into our space."

At the heart of it all is his belief in the power of relationships to transform lives. "A number one value will definitely be that we make bonds and connections with everyone," he says, "and that now, we'll be able to keep that family dynamic on a way bigger scale."

As plans for the new Centre take shape, Robbie is excited about the impact it will have on young people like himself. "I want to see how many more lives we can change and the impact we can make," he says. "We aren't building a structure to come to—we're building a home."

# A Bold Change in the Heart of Town

The New Dawn Youth & Family Centre will transform the block at Official Row and Reserve Street in downtown Glace Bay with a state-of-the-art, 25,000 square-foot facility.

This ground was once alive with the rhythms of industry. From the clang of the DEVCO machine shop to the locomotives serviced in the roundhouse on this very site, it stood at the heart of the Island's mining and industrial heritage. Generations of workers and their families shaped the life of the community here. After it closed, it fell derelict, a brownfield, waiting for the right moment to become the bustling heart of the town once again.

That moment is now.







# Reclaiming the Heart of the Community

When complete, the New Dawn Youth & Family Centre will offer 49-licensed childcare spaces, a gymnasium that converts into a small performance space, indoor and outdoor skateparks, classroom-style spaces for lessons, training and events, a commercial kitchen for education and community programming, and a cafeteria.

It will also provide a gathering place for a community that has experienced the isolation and physical deterioration that comes with post-industrial decline. By bringing people together, the Centre will serve as a place to seed and nurture local solutions to local challenges and local conversations about building a brighter future.

The Centre will be Rick Hansen certified for universal physical accessibility and serve as a hub for services for youth and families in an inclusive, beautiful, and dignified setting. These will include services like:

- Free programming for children, teens, families, and seniors
- Life skills, arts, recreation, technology, and entrepreneurship classes
- Expansion of the long-standing successful programming by Undercurrent Youth Society
- Programming and services offered by other community and government partners
- Volunteer, mentorship, and employment opportunities for youth

# A New Home for Change

## The Undercurrent Youth Society

Undercurrent Youth Society was created to inspire hope among children in Glace Bay, New Waterford, and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM). Undercurrent works to create conditions for all children and youth in the community to be free from poverty, addiction, and hopelessness.

For almost twenty years, the staff and volunteers of Undercurrent have worked tirelessly from their repurposed home on York Street, Glace Bay. The new Centre will allow them to transition and grow their programming and services, connecting with more youth and families in a building that is bright, accessible, and full of modern amenities and spaces.



**Glace Bay, to me, represents hope. I want to stay here, be part of the change, and help make it a place people are proud to call home.**

Chris Kaiser, Undercurrent Youth Centre









# Cultivating New Childcare

## Real Change for Childcare in the CBRM

Through engagement with residents, community organizations, and childcare providers, New Dawn identified a strong need for additional full-time childcare in Glace Bay. In a community hard hit by poverty and addiction, new childcare spaces will have a lasting impact. Parents can get back to work or complete their education, improving the economic outlook for their families, while their little ones receive the very best start to their days and a lifetime of learning and growth.

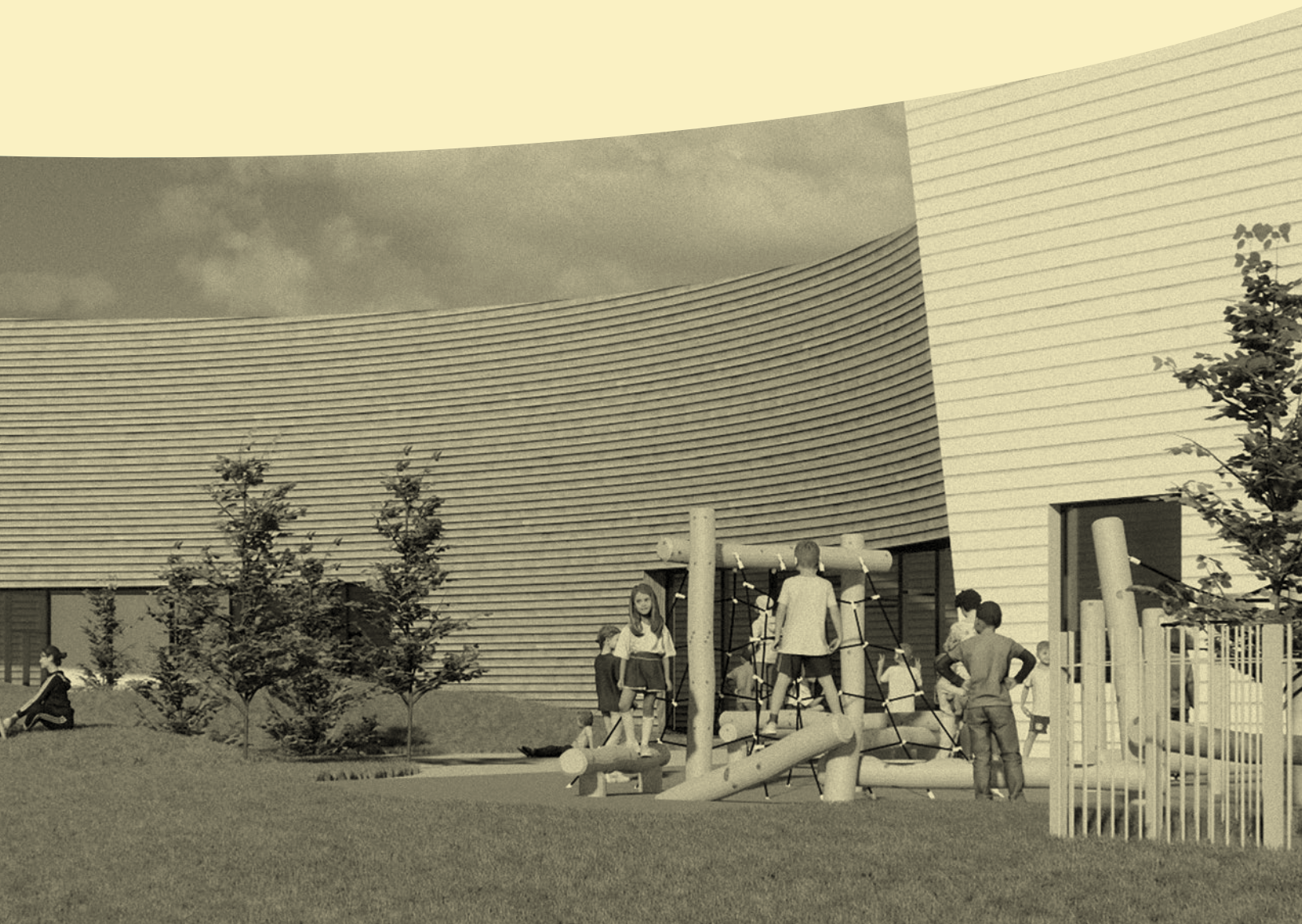


# Raising Hope with 49 New Daycare Spaces

The Centre will be home to the first new licensed early childhood education centre in Glace Bay in more than 50 years. Designed to alleviate pressure on parents, the Centre will offer accessible full-day programming for infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children, and prioritize three populations: low-income families, newcomer families, and children with disabilities.

**All our children are deserving of spaces that reflect their beauty and worth back to them, that challenge them, that carry them through hard times, and that help them uncover the unique gift they want to offer to the world.**

Erika Shea



# Ashley's Dream of a Place for All

Though they now live in northern Cape Breton, Ashley's ties to New Waterford run deep. Their parents still live there, and the town's mining legacy shaped both their family and their identity.

New Waterford is rooted in its coal mining history. Ashley's grandfather started working in the mines in New Waterford when he was 14, with their mother's family arriving from Inverness once the mines there closed. "There's something about feeling rooted in a place, even with its dark and light sides," they reflect.

Unfortunately, Ashley's beloved hometown faces serious challenges. Ever since the last mine shut down for good, New Waterford has been in transition, with effects that ripple throughout the community—including high rates of child poverty, unemployment, and opioid use disorder.

"All those things, the legacy of poverty and struggle, have always been a concern, and continue to be a concern for me," Ashley says.

Ashley McKenzie (she/they) is a filmmaker based in Unama'ki—Cape Breton Island. Ashley sees hope in the New Dawn Youth & Family Centre in nearby Glace Bay, believing the development will fill a gap in the social landscape of the Island and serve as a welcoming, multi-generational space for people from all walks of life.

In particular, they express hope for the Centre's proposed cross-cultural programming, an essential step given the recent influx of newcomers to the Island. "The diversity now is the most exciting change I've seen in my lifetime,"

Ashley said. With this in mind, the Youth and Family Centre will create spaces where diverse groups can forge and strengthen new community ties.

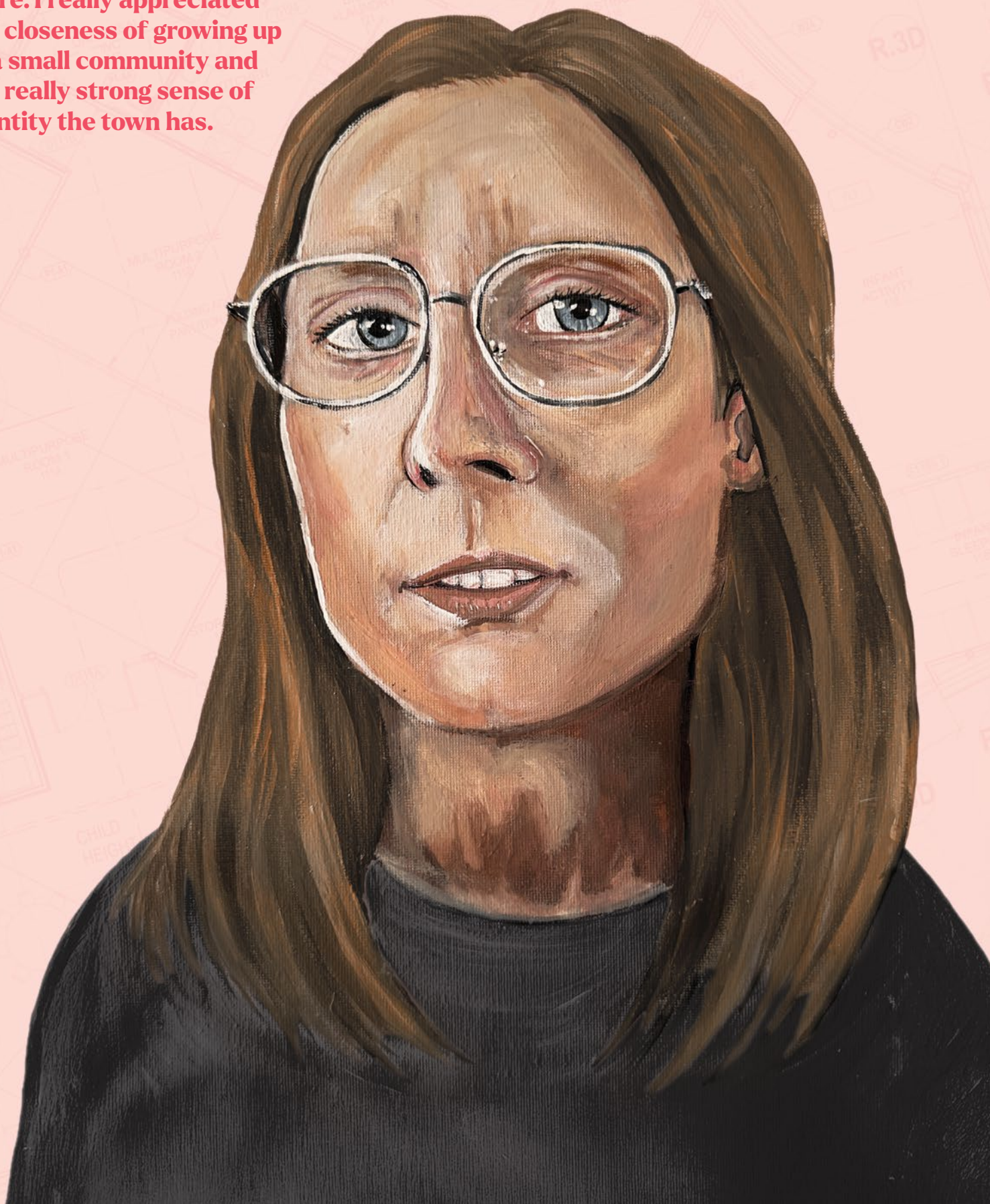
Ashley also emphasized the importance of welcoming families living in poverty, as well as people in the 2SLGBTQ+ community. "People raising children need a lot of support, especially those living below the poverty line," they say. For Ashley, this includes "being mindful of people who don't quite fit that 'traditional family' label... 2SLGBTQ+ folks, or people living in alternative family structures. They should all feel like this space is for them."

Overall, Ashley believes the most transformative part of the new Centre won't be the programs or the design of the facility, but the humanity and interactions that will unfold there. "I love the idea of people spending time with one another, in person," they say. "I think it's so important, especially right now, to step outside of the virtual world and come together."

For Ashley, the Centre will offer a new place to feel rooted, supported, and inspired by their community all over again.



**I feel a lot of tenderness  
towards New Waterford,  
My formative years as a child  
and teenager were spent  
there. I really appreciated  
the closeness of growing up  
in a small community and  
the really strong sense of  
identity the town has.**





## A Sustainable Path Forward

The New Dawn Youth & Family Centre will set in motion the transformation of a former industrial site into a vibrant green space, open to everyone in the CBRM and beyond. Plans for the Centre also include numerous measures to ensure both environmental and financial sustainability. These include:

- Net-zero carbon design
- Solar panels for on-site energy generation
- High-efficiency HVAC systems
- Use of sustainable and recycled materials wherever possible
- Green roof for insulation and stormwater management
- Electric vehicle charging stations

## Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™

Accessibility matters, and we're proud to share that the New Dawn Youth & Family Centre will be Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certified (RHFAC).

The Rick Hansen Foundation leads Canada's foremost program for measuring, certifying, and improving accessibility in the built environment. They help organizations like New Dawn identify and remove barriers—both seen and unseen—so that spaces like the Youth & Family Centre are welcoming, safe, and inclusive for all.

New Dawn was also the first organization in Cape Breton to achieve this milestone, when the Eltuek Arts Centre became the region's first building certified RHFAC. The Youth & Family Centre builds on that leadership, extending our commitment to accessibility into a new community space.

**A sustainable future. An accessible future. For a community on the edge of the sea, at the edge of the continent.**





# Brighter Days for a Resilient Community

Transformation doesn't happen overnight. After false starts and faded efforts, leadership that came and went, the need remains. For a community that's carried generations of poverty, unemployment, and addiction, the time is now.

With your help, the new Centre will be:

## A safe space

The New Dawn Youth & Family Centre will be a haven. A place of safety, security, and peace. It will be vibrant, fun, modern, full of life and energy—a place people want to spend time, where they give and receive help, connect with old friends and find new mentors.

## A loving embrace

It will mirror the big and deep hearts of the people here. It will be a place of beauty, light, art, creativity, and laughter. The Centre will be created with love, lead with love, and weave love into the lives and conversations of the community now and forever.

## A community base

It will nourish Glace Bay and the surrounding communities. Leaders and ideas will flourish here. Community conversations will take place here. Action and progress will emerge from here.

Together we can:

- Reduce youth substance use rates
- Increase high school graduation rates
- Improve youth and community health indicators
- Promote youth-led enterprises and volunteerism
- Help in the revitalization of Glace Bay and surrounding communities

**A place for everyone.**

**All we need is your support.**

# Building Something Beautiful Together

To learn more about New Dawn, or how you can support transformative change for the communities of Glace Bay and New Waterford, contact us at:

902-217-2839  
[rtoomey@newdawn.ca](mailto:rtoomey@newdawn.ca)



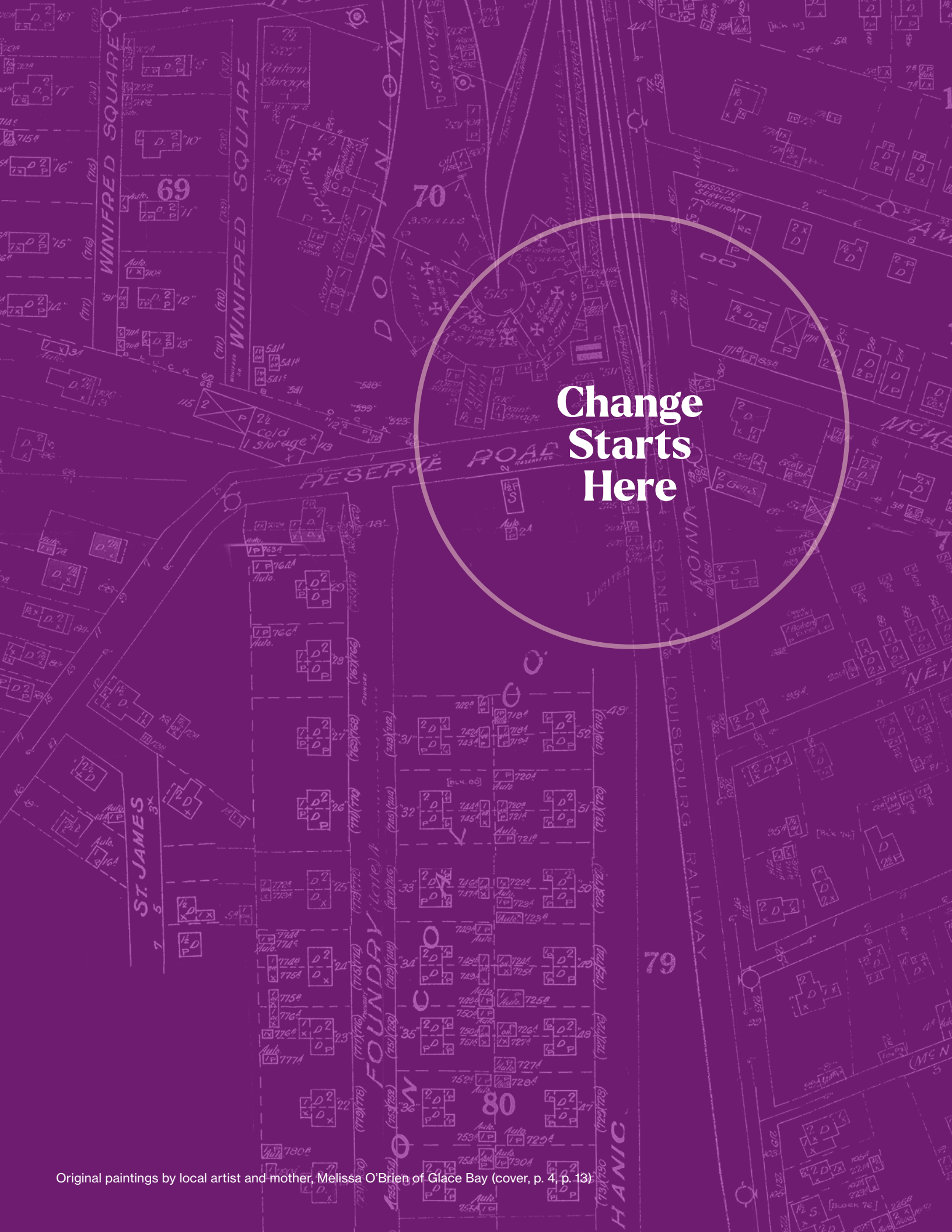
## About New Dawn

New Dawn is Canada's oldest Community Development Corporation, with a 50-year track record of community development in Unama'ki, Cape Breton Island. We operate across eight sectors including food security, healthcare, housing, immigration, and the arts.

Some of our recent success stories include:

- The renovation and opening of the \$17 million Eltuek Arts Centre
- The design, construction, and operation of the Island's largest solar array
- The opening of the Cape Breton Centre for Immigration to support newcomers
- The creation of 35 temporary and 25 permanent housing units for individuals exiting homelessness.





**Change  
Starts  
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**Help bring a new start  
to the next generation.  
Donate today.**

**[rtoomey@newdawn.ca](mailto:rtoomey@newdawn.ca)  
902-217-2839**

