

AGM Meeting

September 14, 2026, 6pm

Attendees: Winona Zelenka, Chair and Treasurer, Debra Petrushchak Secretary, Jeff Dick, Tamara Lindsay, Kirk Makin, Susan Bishop, Alex MacLeod, Ron Searles, Amanda Carter, Richard Carter, Jodie Makin, Kathryn Schuback, Vanessa Mooney, Issy Mooney, Marianne Oundjian, Melissa Ray, Candela Castro, Susan Bessonette, Judith MacLeod

By Zoom

Call to Order- 6:05 pm

1. Welcome and Opening

Winona welcomed members, families, board members and guests to the Annual General Meeting.

She noted that only she and Deb are the only present board members, Christie being unable to attend; but that there is still a quorum of voting members and therefore we can proceed.

She moved to approve the amended agenda circulated earlier this day, and Deb seconded.

She introduced the special guest Candela Castro, highlighting several key points from Candela's resume, (Candela is a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto in Applied Music Sciences) and talked about how the Sisters have been receiving music therapy services twice a month for the past almost three years, and how much they love it, and how interesting it is from her perspective as observer.

2. Guest Presentation – Music Therapy

Winona welcomed **Candela**, a clinical supervisor in the Applied Music and Health Master's program at the University of Toronto, to provide an overview of the music therapy program offered to Sisters in the Six.

Sisters in the Six has partnered with the University of Toronto for approximately three years, with students completing clinical placements and providing music therapy sessions to the Sisters twice monthly.

Candela explained that the program uses **Neurologic Music Therapy**, an evidence-based approach that uses elements of music to support non-musical goals. These may include:

- movement and coordination;
- attention and memory;
- communication;
- sensory integration;
- emotional regulation;
- confidence and autonomy;
- self-expression;

- social participation and cooperation; and
- participation in everyday life.

Music engages multiple areas of the brain rather than a single “music centre.” Rhythm, melody, movement and other musical elements can therefore be used therapeutically to address a variety of goals.

At the beginning of the program year, participants are involved in identifying goals they would like to work toward. Previous goals have included increasing self-confidence, learning to advocate for oneself while respecting the needs of others, emotional regulation and self-expression.

Sessions may include singing, movement, playing instruments, improvisation, songwriting, breathing exercises, relaxation techniques and group activities. Different forms of participation are encouraged so that each Sister can engage in a way that is comfortable and meaningful to her.

The Sisters generally receive approximately **six sessions per semester, or twelve sessions annually**, with each session lasting approximately one hour.

It was noted that the University of Toronto partnership allows Sisters in the Six to receive these sessions **at no cost**, as the sessions form part of the students’ clinical placements.

Winona thanked Candela and the University of Toronto for their ongoing partnership and the significant benefit the program provides to the Sisters.

3. Charitable Status

Winona reported that one of the most significant milestones of the past year was Sisters in the Six receiving its **official charitable status from the Canada Revenue Agency effective January 7, 2026**.

The organization retained BIG Charity Law Group to assist with the application process.

Special thanks were extended to those whose financial contributions helped cover the professional fees associated with obtaining charitable status, including **Mary Ann Unjin, Peter Levitt and May**.

Benefits of registered charitable status include:

- the ability to issue official charitable tax receipts;
- eligibility for foundation grants and funding from other registered charities;
- increased organizational credibility and public trust;
- exemption from corporate income tax; and
- eligibility for applicable HST rebates.

Winona also thanked **Jeff** for establishing the organization’s charitable tax-receipt processes, assisting with online systems and maintaining the Sisters in the Six website.

4. Acknowledgements

Winona acknowledged several individuals whose work has been instrumental to the organization.

Debbie, Event Lead, Board Member and Secretary, was thanked for planning and executing Sisters in the Six events, including the Six Mix dances, and for her ongoing work as a sounding board and member of the Board.

Chloe was recognized for her dependable and enthusiastic support of the weekly Sisters sessions and for the professional expertise she brings to the program.

Melissa and Concord in the City were thanked for continuing to host the weekly Sisters in the Six programming.

5. Financial Update

Members had previously received the organization's Profit and Loss Statement and donation information.

A question was raised regarding **CanadaHelps processing fees**. Winona explained that some CanadaHelps fees had been recorded under two different expense categories but represented processing charges associated with donations.

As an example, a \$2,000 donation processed through CanadaHelps resulted in approximately \$1,910 being received by Sisters in the Six.

Members were advised that donations do **not** have to be made through CanadaHelps. Cheques and other direct donations can be made to Sisters in the Six, with official charitable tax receipts subsequently issued by the organization. CanadaHelps remains a convenient option for donors despite its processing fees.

A question was also raised regarding professional expenses related to obtaining charitable status. Winona estimated that approximately **\$4,000 of the legal/professional expenses incurred this year will not recur next year**, as they were extraordinary related to lawyer's fees.

The organization finished the fiscal period with **more than \$12,000 in the bank**.

Following consultation regarding the rules applicable to charitable organizations, the Board decided to place **\$7,000 into a cashable GIC**. These funds have been designated toward the organization's longer-term housing goal and a potential future mortgage down payment.

Approximately **\$5,000 remained available for operations** at the beginning of September.

The Board remains conscious of maintaining sufficient operating funds while also beginning to build reserves toward the future housing initiative.

6. Donations and Community Support

Winona reported that Sisters in the Six received several generous donations during the year and acknowledged donors for their support.

The organization has also benefited significantly from donated programming and services. In particular, the twice-monthly University of Toronto music therapy program has substantially reduced programming costs while providing high-quality therapeutic programming.

7. Charitable Gaming Application

Winona provided an update regarding the organization's application to participate in **charitable gaming (C-Gaming)**.

The application process has been extensive, and Sisters in the Six is currently responding to a third round of questions from the liaison officer.

If approved, volunteers would provide designated volunteer hours through charitable gaming activities, with Sisters in the Six receiving funding in return.

Funds generated through charitable gaming must be maintained and used in accordance with the program's specific requirements.

Potential uses being explored include:

- Independence Weekends;
- intensive weekend social-skills workshops;
- weekend wellness and self-care workshops; and
- if permitted, contributions toward the organization's longer-term housing initiative.

The application remains in progress.

8. Membership and Weekly Program Capacity

The weekly Sisters in the Six program currently has a practical maximum of approximately **14 participants** because of space limitations at Concord in the City.

The current space becomes particularly crowded during activities such as yoga.

It was noted that Concord is exploring opportunities for a larger facility in the future. A larger space could potentially allow Sisters in the Six to expand its membership, although no immediate change is planned.

The Board continues to look for additional opportunities to expand the organization's reach beyond the existing weekly program.

9. Six Mix Glow in the Dark Dance – May 8, 2026

Debbie presented the Event Lead report regarding the first **Six Mix Glow in the Dark Dance**, held May 8, 2026.

The event was considered both a successful community-building event and a successful fundraiser.

Approximately **65 tickets were sold**.

Cash revenue included ticket sales and donations received through cash, Square/debit and Eventbrite, together with:

- \$22.50 in additional cash donations;
- \$1,500 donated by Jeff's parents;
- \$200 donated by Debbie's sister Susie; and
- \$500 donated by Susie's partner/Lakeview.

Total cash revenue was reported as approximately **\$4,836.96**.

Event expenses were approximately **\$2,255**, including:

- specialized lighting – \$355;
- venue – \$400;

- dance leader – \$300;
- insurance – \$100;
- DJ – \$400;
- decorations – \$400;
- support workers – \$200; and
- food and beverages – \$100.

The resulting net proceeds were approximately **\$2,581.95**.

In addition to cash contributions, **SanRemo Bakery** donated 100 cupcakes and **PosterOne** donated event signage.

Debbie emphasized that the financial results represent only part of the event's impact. Planning began approximately four months before the dance and involved developing the concept and theme, securing the venue, DJ and dance leader, preparing promotional materials, marketing, donor outreach, ticket coordination, purchasing and sourcing decorations, collecting donations, coordinating volunteers and managing the event itself.

Event setup took approximately **2½ hours**, with an additional hour required for cleanup.

Approximately nine volunteers assisted, including seven members of the Petrushchak/Dick families, Board Housing Lead Christie, and Dorlean Rotolo.

The Board expressed its appreciation to Debbie and all volunteers for the considerable work involved in producing the event.

10. Six Mix Fall Friendsgiving Dance – September 25, 2026

Debbie provided an update regarding the upcoming **Six Mix Fall Friendsgiving Dance**, scheduled for September 25, 2026.

Before confirming the event date, Debbie ensured that the same core volunteer team would be available. The organization is also using the same venue, DJ and dance leader, which has significantly simplified planning.

Confirmed cash sponsorships/donations total **\$2,000**, consisting of:

- \$1,500 from Jeff's parents; and
- \$500 from **Dr. Amy Bishai**, who is sponsoring the dance.

Additional in-kind support includes:

- decorations from PosterOne;
- cookies supported through Susie and Nick;
- signage from Mr. Signs, including three woodland-character standees; and
- considerable reusable décor already owned or purchased for the event.

Approximately \$200 in additional decorations was purchased for the new Friendsgiving/woodland theme.

At the time of the AGM, approximately **30 tickets had been confirmed/purchased**, with additional attendees indicating their intention to participate.

Debbie noted that ticket sales for the May dance occurred largely during the final week before the event and expressed optimism that the same pattern would occur for Friendsgiving.

11. Future Six Mix Dances

Based on the success of the first Six Mix, the Board plans to make the dances **two annual signature events**.

The primary purpose is not solely fundraising. The dances provide an inclusive social opportunity for adults with developmental disabilities while helping Sisters in the Six build relationships with other families, organizations, advocates and members of the broader community.

The initial costs of both themes have been higher because the organization has been building its inventory of decorations and event materials.

Most major décor for both themes can now be stored and reused, significantly reducing future event costs.

Relationships have also been established with suppliers, donors, volunteers, the venue, DJ and dance leader. As a result, Sisters in the Six now has two established event models that can be repeated and improved rather than recreated from the beginning each year.

12. Eventbrite and Charitable Identification

Richard suggested exploring whether future Eventbrite tickets and/or receipts could more clearly identify **Sisters in the Six as the charitable organization behind the Six Mix**, potentially including the organization's charitable registration information where appropriate.

The Board agreed this was worth investigating as an additional way to increase awareness and credibility.

Action Item: Explore options for adding clearer Sisters in the Six charitable identification to future Eventbrite event materials and receipts.

13. Housing Initiative

Winona provided a brief update on the organization's longer-term housing initiative in the absence of Housing Lead Christie.

Since approximately May 2025, representatives of Sisters in the Six have participated in **five meetings with various housing organizations and stakeholders** to better understand possible pathways toward creating a future collective housing opportunity for Sisters who may wish to live together.

A significant conclusion from these discussions is that Sisters in the Six is unlikely to be able to undertake a housing development independently and will require an experienced **housing partner**.

Discussions have included organizations with experience in affordable and supportive housing, including Habitat for Humanity and organizations working with government housing programs.

Various possible funding models have been explored. Some programs may require the organization to contribute a significant portion of project costs before government or other financing becomes available.

The Board has therefore begun setting aside funds through the \$7,000 GIC toward a potential future down payment.

If charitable gaming funding is approved and its rules permit, the Board would also like to consider making regular contributions toward the housing reserve.

Once a viable project and partnership are established, Sisters in the Six may undertake a **capital campaign** to raise funds specifically for housing.

Richard asked whether a financial roadmap had been developed outlining the anticipated project cost, required down payment, fundraising targets and timeline.

Winona advised that it is still too early to establish reliable figures because the financial model will depend significantly on the eventual housing partner and project structure.

The initiative therefore remains in the **information-gathering and partnership-development stage**.

Winona clarified for newer members that the long-term goal is to explore a collective housing opportunity where some Sisters who wish to do so may eventually live together with appropriate supports.

14. Approval of Previous AGM Minutes

Richard noted that the previous AGM minutes had not yet formally been approved and identified several minor corrections, including:

- ensuring attendees' full names are recorded consistently;
- adding Gayle Carter
- reviewing whether call-to-order and adjournment times should be included; and
- correcting the spelling of Crystal's name in Section 4.

Motion: To approve the previous AGM minutes subject to the amendments identified by Richard.

Moved by: Susan

Seconded by: Member in attendance

Motion: Carried.

Action Item: Debbie to make the identified corrections to the previous AGM minutes.

15. Employment Opportunities for the Sisters

Winona reported that the Board continues to explore meaningful employment and income-generating opportunities for Sisters.

Previous discussions with **Common Grounds** regarding a possible West End location did not progress because the organization's preferred expansion location was more central.

The Board is now investigating **The Raw Carrot**, a social-enterprise model based in Paris, Ontario that creates employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through the production and sale of food products.

The organization offers a model through which other groups may potentially establish similar operations.

Debbie and her sister **Suzy**, who has an MBA and business ownership experience, are investigating the opportunity further.

Suzy is scheduled to speak with representatives from The Raw Carrot on **Friday, September 18, 2026** to obtain additional information.

The goal is to determine whether the model could provide meaningful paid work and a collective employment opportunity for some of the Sisters.

Action Item: Suzy and Debbie to continue investigating The Raw Carrot model and report their findings to the Board.

16. Upcoming Six Mix

Members were reminded that the **Six Mix Fall Friendsgiving Dance will take place September 25, 2026.**

Members and families were encouraged to purchase tickets and share information about the event within their networks.

17. Other Business

Members were invited to contact Winona with questions that could not be addressed because of time limitations.

Meeting notes/minutes will be made available following the AGM.

18. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting Adjourned: 7 pm, September 14, 2026

Action Items

1. **Debbie** – Amend the previous AGM minutes to reflect the corrections identified during the meeting.
2. **Board/Event Lead** – Investigate adding clearer Sisters in the Six charitable identification to Eventbrite tickets and/or receipts.
3. **Winona/Board** – Continue the charitable gaming application process and respond to outstanding information requests.
4. **Housing Committee/Board** – Continue exploring potential housing partners and funding models.
5. **Suzy and Debbie** – Continue investigating The Raw Carrot employment/social-enterprise opportunity and report back to the Board.
6. **Board** – Continue building the housing reserve while maintaining sufficient operating funds.
7. **Members and families** – Promote the September 25 Six Mix Friendsgiving Dance and encourage advance ticket purchases.