

Co-operation builds stronger communities



Michele Kading
COMMUNITY
CORRESPONDENT

ST. VITAL

In March, I shared a long flight with a wealthy Canadian. We spoke of many things. It was clear that our world views were miles apart — competition versus co-operation.

My seatmate was very concerned about debt loads being carried by governments.

To withstand the next economic crash, he legally pays no income tax to build his personal wealth. I suggested that he is contributing to the debt load and the next crash. He said his priority was to provide for his son — not weaker or less fortunate people in the community.

Less than three weeks later, I attended Casera Credit Union's annual general meeting. The room was brimming with community spirit. Casera is a community-focused financial institution. Its priority is to help its members achieve their financial goals. Building strong, vibrant neighbourhoods is one of its cornerstone values.

Casera has supported Save Our Seine since 2007. It also supports Walk with L'Arche, the Transcona Historical Museum, United Way of Winnipeg, Dakota

Community Centre, Jonathan Toews Sportsplex, Dream Factory, Manitoba Mutts, and the Christmas Cheer Board.

Casera pioneered the high school credit union concept in Canada. Titan Credit Union (Transcona Collegiate) started in 1997. Lancer Credit Union (Dakota Collegiate) opened in 2015. With help from Casera, students manage real credit unions at their schools. They learn financial literacy and business skills. They also earn course credits.

The AGM closed with the presentation of Casera's community leadership award.

The 2017 recipient, Wilma Sotas, is a passionate advocate for the Seine River, forests, and green spaces. She was a founding member of OURS — the group that saved Winnipeg golf courses from development.

Wilma acts locally and globally. She helped create the Institute for International Women's Rights. She is active in Grands 'n' More Winnipeg, which assists grandmothers and children affected by AIDS/HIV in sub-Saharan Africa.

Wilma also started the December 6 Fund (through The Winnipeg Foundation). Proceeds from the fund will help end violence against women and girls.

As I listened to Wilma humbly accept Casera's leadership award, my thoughts returned to my seatmate on the plane.

The contrast was stark. My seatmate



Photo by Michele Kading

Casera Credit Union chief executive officer Brent Thomas (right) presented Wilma Sotas with Casera's 2017 community leadership award.

clearly follows the new competitive model — "survival of the richest." Competitors seek to maximize their personal wealth. They avoid sharing with the larger community.

On the other hand, Wilma and Casera embody the co-operative model. Through caring and sharing, co-operators build stronger communities. They make the world a better place for everyone.

Michele Kading is a community correspondent for St. Vital and the executive director of Save Our Seine — www.saveourseine.com