

## A MUST-MAKE MOVE

### CEO REFLECTS ON THE SCIMAR STORY

MAY 25, 2022

A fallen tree. A rock. A sharp turn. Another paddler. When you're a white-water kayaker like Mick Lutt, you face obstacles and challenges all the time. That's the rush, that's the bliss, that's the fun.

"When I'm on a high-intensity river, that's when I'm in my state of flow," says Lutt, SciMar's Chief Executive Officer. "There are real risks, of course. Paddling at this level often demands quick adaptations and split-second decisions in order to survive."

He calls those kinds of decisions "must-make moves". You either adapt with confidence or face severe consequences. And for Lutt, that's not just a lesson for the water, it's a lesson for life, and a lesson for business.



Mick Lutt finds his bliss on the water: "Paddling at this level often demands quick adaptations and split-second decisions in order to survive."

In 2009, Lutt realized that establishing and incorporating SciMar with his parents—Melanie and Dr. Wayne Lutt—was a must-make move, because type 2 diabetes was a must-solve problem.

"Dad had made this groundbreaking discovery some years prior, and was struggling through a flawed commercial relationship with an incubator group to bring the work to market," says Lutt. "He had a science-backed plan to solve type 2 diabetes. What he didn't have was a viable way to complete the research or the dollars to take it to trial and commercialize the discovery."

The discovery, made in 1996, was a previously unknown hormone produced by the liver. Dr. Lutt originally called it hepatic insulin-sensitizing substance (the HISS hormone), and renamed it "hepatalin" in 2021. Dr. Lutt concluded through *in vitro* and *in vivo* research, that when adequately produced, hepatalin stimulates the body's ability to partition glucose into muscle. When the liver does not produce enough hepatalin, the pancreas produces additional insulin, which causes nutrient energy to be partitioned into fat. It was a revolutionary discovery because it offered a new way to detect, prevent, treat, and even reverse type 2 diabetes, a condition that affects nearly half-a-billion people worldwide.

By 2009, Mick Lutt was living in Dauphin, Manitoba, but spending stretches of time in Winnipeg for his consulting work in leadership, management training, and community development—work that also took him across western Canada. He was also teaching at the Asper School of Business and was in the process of selling a kayaking school he had built from scratch. His parents set a room aside for him in their St. Vital condo, and he would overhear them planning their next move as they struggled with their business relationship with the incubator group.

"To make a long story short, I said, 'let me help; let's start our own company; I'll be the CEO,'" says Lutt. "'Let's build this into something real and let's solve type 2 diabetes'. I think Mom and Dad were excited, relieved, and grateful."

And so, the journey began.

Lautt made up a company name, cobbled together some promotional material, and quickly joined the Life Science Association of Manitoba (LSAM), now known as [Bioscience Association Manitoba](#). Within a couple of weeks, he arranged for his Dad to present his work at a conference in Minneapolis and they all went to the conference together as part of an LSAM-subsidized trip.

“We’re on the Greyhound and everyone’s going around introducing themselves and I introduced myself as the CEO of SciMar Ltd. and explained that we were looking to change the type 2 diabetes paradigm through the lens of new science,” says Lautt. “At that point, on that bus, it suddenly felt real, but it also felt very natural.”

Dr. Lautt impressed the audience with his presentation at the conference and invited people to speak to the new company’s CEO in the crowd for more information and to discuss investment opportunities. Mick Lautt stood up and waved and was soon approached by an interested member of the crowd. A handshake led to a lunch, and that lunch led to a \$350,000 cash infusion to keep the company moving forward.

“The focus of the first few years was securing control of the intellectual property with my Mom, who is a skilled lawyer,” says Lautt. “We also started to envision what the [product pipeline](#) could become as the research moved forward.”

There was still some preclinical research going on in Dr. Lautt’s University of Manitoba lab, largely paid for by the Lautt family themselves, but the CEO felt that the focus needed to expand from not only validating the science, but also to building a solid corporation to support the next round of research and the complex regulatory path to market.

“We closed the university lab, instituted a publication freeze, and laid off our staff until we could secure the IP, develop a viable business plan, and confirm some investors,” says Lautt.

In 2015, Lautt’s brother-in-law and “wingman” [John West](#) left his senior management position at IBM to become SciMar’s Chief Development Officer. Lautt and West got to work and entered into an arrangement with a former colleague of Lautt’s in the Cayman Islands to explore securing international investors and venture capitalists. On reflection, Lautt says, the timing wasn’t right, so SciMar and their Cayman Island partners had an amicable parting of ways. At the end of 2016, the brothers-in-law rolled up their sleeves, developed a sophisticated business plan and an online data room for prospective investors in Canada, and started knocking on doors on their own.



SciMar CEO Mick Lautt: “To remain authentic and true to our vision, we have to remember that our goal is not to create products. Our goal is to eradicate a disease.”

“John estimates that I did 1,000 meetings and presentations in 2017,” says Lautt. “I was telling people we had a pill that could reverse type 2 diabetes and offering them a look at the data, and yet they would turn me down. I realized that to get the momentum going, I needed to start with people who knew me personally.”

Over many years, Lautt had developed a large and diverse personal network through his consulting and teaching, but also through his impressive community development activities, including work with youth-at-risk in Winnipeg’s core area, work with Indigenous youth throughout Manitoba, life skills training, and wilderness adventure-based learning.



By 2017, Lutt had also developed strong connections in Dauphin and all around Manitoba's Parkland Region. The community had seen what Lutt could do as a business leader and community advocate. While building a strong client base in the region for his consulting practice, he also took on leading roles in launching and developing a paddling club, a skate park, a network of four-season bike trails, and a professional development and networking program through the local chamber of commerce.

Lutt and West booked Dauphin's Countryfest Community Cinema on a chilly December afternoon. They invited 30 guests; all 30 showed up. They projected an impressive plan (affectionately remembered as "the subway") on the Countryfest screen, showing SciMar's pathway to market. They explained how they were planning to de-risk the venture and gave their guests a crash course on the science of hepatalin and nutrient partitioning.

"Most important, we had answers to their questions and we were transparent about the challenges and risks," says Lutt. "After all, we were setting out to change a century-old diabetes paradigm. But people were very interested."

Before long, SciMar's seed round gained traction, raising close to \$3 million, mostly from that cinema crowd. Those initial investments allowed SciMar to open a private independent lab, bring back Dr. Lutt's original research team, build a national contractor team, and produce prototypes of SciMar's diagnostic and preventative products. The seed round investment and the work it enabled ultimately leveraged even more private investment. At the time of writing, SciMar has raised close to \$15 million. These funds are supporting marketing outreach, clinical trials for all four products, and further lab work with a focus on producing the purest hepatalin sample possible. The funds have also allowed the [Wellness Transformation Network \(WTN\)](#) to take shape. The WTN is SciMar's community outreach initiative and clinical trials platform, designed to promote community well-being through lifestyle interventions measured and understood through the hepatalin paradigm.



John West and Mick Lutt share "the subway" at the Dauphin Countryfest Theatre in December 2017: "...we had answers to their questions and we were transparent about the challenges and risks," says Lutt.

"To remain authentic and true to our vision, we have to remember that our goal is not to create products. Our goal is to eradicate a disease. The products will play a critical role in fulfilling our mission," says Lutt. "We are creating value for all stakeholders, not just shareholders. But shareholders will benefit, too. When you work ethically and with higher purpose, there is indeed money to be made. This is money that will provide returns to investors and can also be re-invested into more science."

The work continues for Lutt and company as they navigate the clinical trials process, speak to more prospective investors, develop more marketing collateral, engage with potential pharmaceutical industry partners, launch a social impact bond, and design measurable lifestyle interventions for individuals and communities.

The days are long, but Lutt is fuelled by the process. He's excited about the next steps, and humbled by the lessons he has learned along the way. That humility and the lessons that came with it are driving a new SciMar initiative known as the "Manitoba Moonshot Studio".

"Getting to where we are has been challenging and a lot of fun, and we've been learning a lot along the way. I have taken companies from zero to one a few times, but I haven't been part of a team solving type 2 diabetes before," laughs Lutt. "It's been said before, but sometimes building a business like this feels like jumping off a cliff and building the plane on the way down."

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Lautt and his colleagues are establishing the Manitoba Moonshot Studio as a one-of-a-kind, full-service incubator where people can get the help they need to test and commercialize their scientific discoveries.

“After these years building SciMar, we think we have some wisdom to share,” says Lautt. “We are trying to build a platform—a one-stop resource—where people can get the support they need to complete their research, collaborate with related academics, develop marketing collateral, engage with investors, attract non-dilutive funds, explore routes to commercialization, access clinical trials, and more. We are eager to share what we know and to learn more along the way ourselves.”

As the research into hepatalin reaches its next milestones and the WTN launches, helping others accelerate their impacts on human well-being through the Manitoba Moonshot Studio is one of SciMar’s next must-make moves.

“The Studio marks the next step in building life sciences capacity in Manitoba. It will support our own work while helping others succeed as well,” says Lautt. “If the industry flourishes in Manitoba, we all benefit.”

By: Stu Slayen



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## BEYOND THE NORM

### SCIMAR CONSULTANT BRINGS BROAD RANGE OF EXPERTISE

FEBRUARY 11, 2020

In 2018, business development expert Norm Dupas attended a presentation about SciMar.

At first, the former pharmaceutical sales representative was merely curious. By the end of the presentation, though, he was wide-eyed and blown away. “This is Nobel Prize-worthy science,” Dupas remembers thinking at the time. “This was truly exceptional research being advanced by remarkable people.”

His curiosity and engagement persisted and, in May 2019, Dupas signed on as SciMar’s Product Development Consultant. His role is to help SciMar’s product pipeline take shape with proper licensing and adherence to Health Canada and Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) regulations. Aside from his pharma sales background, Dupas comes to the table with hands-on industry expertise as a partner in CinDen Nutritionals, a Winnipeg-based nutraceutical company.

“Sometimes I have to pinch myself when I realize that with SciMar I am part of something that could represent a transformational leap in the prevention and care of type 2 diabetes,” says Dupas, who used to work at his father’s Ste. Anne (Manitoba) pharmacy. “The disease is a global epidemic with a particularly serious impact on our Indigenous communities. I believe SciMar can make a significant difference.”

As important as it is for Dupas to be part of a successful business enterprise, he is particularly excited about the prospect of being part of a movement to enhance global health and to know that he helped make a difference.

“I am an admirer of (the late businessman and philanthropist) Israel Asper,” explains Dupas. “He used to say—and it’s even in his obituary—at the end of the day, you have to have mattered. You have to ask yourself: ‘did you make the world a better place than it was when you entered it, or did you just take up space?’ Well, I know that I don’t just want to take up space. I want to be part of things that matter. And SciMar matters.”

Outside of SciMar, Dupas is a business consultant operating as nivå10 (Swedish for “level 10”), offering his services to a broad range of companies, focusing on marketing, sales, operations, and financing. He has an impressive track record as an entrepreneur and business leader himself, having played a key role in the establishment of Thermea Nature Spa by le Nordik, Cottages at Clear Lake, and Labelle Florists. He is also an advisor to renowned business leadership author Jim Britt and a partner with Britt in the “Live Life @ Level 10” personal development program. In his spare time, he enjoys cooking creative and healthy meals and entertaining guests with his wife, as well as playing guitar with a repertoire delivered with “three chords and the truth”.



Norm Dupas at SciMar investor event in December 2019: “This is Nobel Prize-worthy science.”

The thread that runs through Dupas's life is well-being. He is committed to his own health, works diligently to enrich the well-being of the companies he serves, and is thrilled to work with companies like SciMar to improve the health of people everywhere.

“With SciMar, I have found a company that is well-organized, visionary, has developed a sound business plan, and is in business to change lives,” says Dupas. “I feel very fortunate.”

By: *Stu Slayen*



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## GETTING READY FOR TAKE-OFF

### CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER AND TEAM TAKE SCIMAR TO EXCITING HEIGHTS

APRIL 30, 2021

Fifteen years ago, John West was driving with his uncle near Bridal Falls, just east of Vancouver, British Columbia, when he saw a paraglider flying overhead. Eyes wide, West and Uncle Bruce darted through a maze of country roads, heads sticking out of the car windows, trying to navigate to where the flyer was looking to land.

West and his uncle arrived just in time to ask the glider “a million questions” about paragliding. West was wowed and intrigued, but never imagined he himself would ever run off the side of a cliff and float 7,200 feet above the ground.

Well, things change.

Today, West is the guy in the sky approached by enthusiastic onlookers with a million questions about the activity, and he can answer just about every question about fear, preparation, risk, and solutions. Not just about paragliding, but about business.

“I started paragliding as we were developing SciMar, and I don’t think I would have taken up the hobby if it wasn’t for my work,” says the company’s Chief Development Officer since 2015. “I’m actually terrified of heights! The thought of flying came with a lot of fear and anxiety, but that’s what I was feeling in those earlier days at SciMar when we were finding investors, designing our product pipeline, and envisioning the Wellness Transformation Network. That was all scary, too. So, my hobby couldn’t be pickleball; I needed something that would surpass the level of fear I was feeling at work. The exhilaration of working at SciMar is a 10 out of 10. I needed something that was an 11.”

The fact that West’s hobby involves launching himself off mountains shouldn’t lead one to believe he’s reckless. Quite the opposite, in fact. Paragliding involves keen preparation, impeccable timing, considering a variety of routes and destinations, removing risks, and deeply understanding the changing weather conditions that could affect your flight at a given moment. It’s about seeing the big issues and designing solutions to address them. It’s the same careful but ambitious approach that he’s always brought to his work.

“I’ve worked as a consultant, an employee, and as an entrepreneur and have always functioned as a solution architect,” says West. “There is a significant parallel between flying and my work at SciMar. It’s all about preparation, good process, embracing what works, and looking far ahead to be prepared before you launch, because after that moment you are fully committed to a dynamic situation that cannot be paused or slowed until you land it safely.”



John West, SciMar’s Chief Development Officer: “There is a significant parallel between flying and my work at SciMar. It’s all about preparation, good process, embracing what works, and looking far ahead...”



West: “I have never believed in going after the low-hanging fruit first. Going for quick wins is what you do when you don’t have a plan.”

After university, West moved to California to study and earned an industry certification from Microsoft as an Enterprise Solution Architect. West joined a mail order computer company as the second employee in a new department called “e-commerce”. A year later that website was selling over US\$1 billion.

“It was a crazy time from 1998 to 2000. Our small team of engineers, lawyers, and investment bankers spun off three companies and publicly listed each on the Nasdaq. After that experience, I was hooked on the start-up lifestyle, the big goals, and tight deadlines. It was so exhilarating!,” he says. “By early 2000, I sold my stock options and started my own software company on my 25th birthday. That company grew steadily for five years making bespoke software for logistics and warehousing companies—something we call Enterprise Resource Planning today. Back then we had to build it all from scratch. It was tedious work, but the insights gained into business, both theirs and my own, stuck with me forever.” After five years, West sold his company and relocated to Vancouver.

By 2010, West’s big-picture, data-driven approach to solving problems and delivering valuable solutions catapulted him into a senior management position at IBM, overseeing the work of 200 consultants in the Canadian Business Unit serving large clients. It was at IBM where he fine-tuned his approaches to—and philosophies about—systems, business, and value creation.

“I have never believed in going after the low-hanging fruit first. Going for quick wins is what you do when you don’t have a plan,” he says. “I believe that to be successful and to be innovative in a meaningful way, you need to solve big problems with big solutions. And you need to always look three months, six months, 12 months out, removing risks and boulders along the way. Find what works and then replicate it, leveraging the best talent available; what doesn’t work, you set aside.”

As SciMar’s solution architect, his work is multi-faceted. He leads the company’s product development and marketing efforts, and he is actively involved with CEO Mick Lutt in attracting investors and planning the launch of the Wellness Transformation Network outreach and clinical trial initiative. With the conclusive identification of hepatic insulin-sensitizing substance (the HISS hormone) in human blood in the company’s near future, West, Lutt, and the entire team are set to soar to new heights.

“There comes a time in your career when you want to be doing something that has real impact and real significance for people,” says West. “I like working with others to solve big problems, and the global scourge of type 2 diabetes is a very big problem. I’ve learned that you can’t simply dream of success without execution, because nothing happens. But you also can’t execute without a big vision, because value and potential will be missed. And a big vision is what you need to attract supporters, inspire your team, and transform the world. SciMar is the union of a powerful dream and solid execution. This is where I need to be.”

By: Stu Slayen



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## THE MANITOBA ADVANTAGE

### SCIMAR POISED TO CHANGE THE CONVERSATION

MARCH 22, 2022

When Dr. Jerry Gray is fishing on Crowduck Lake in eastern Manitoba, he is grateful for the solitude, the silence, and the province's relatively low profile. But when it comes to business and innovation, he'd like more people to take notice of the keystone province.

"We need to get better at tooting our own horn," says Dr. Gray, Dean Emeritus and Senior Scholar at the University of Manitoba's Asper School of Business. "Historically, we haven't bragged here about our businesses, not like in Alberta or California."

Not that there haven't been many boast-worthy successes, notes Dr. Gray, pointing to Skip the Dishes, the trucking industry, and Winnipeg's evolution as the continent's key transportation hub. In fact, he says, there is an advantage to launching a major business in Manitoba: "There's room to manoeuvre, room to experiment and innovate; and there are people here who will get on board financially and with moral support. In some ways, we're just the right size."

Dr. Gray points to SciMar as another Manitoba enterprise with dramatic global potential; a company that can change the conversation about type 2 diabetes while enriching the profile of Manitoba where SciMar was born and where its headquarters and lab remain.

Dr. Gray was introduced to SciMar Chief Executive Officer Mick Lutt early in March by SciMar investment consultant [Chuck LaFlèche](#), a former student of Dr. Gray.

"I bumped into Chuck at the Manitoba Club and asked him what he's been up to," says the Indiana-born Dr. Gray. "He told me about SciMar and gave me the pitch of a lifetime. I realized how big this could be and agreed to meet with Mick."

When they met in early March, Lutt shared the company story and some promotional material, and explained how the discovery of the hepatalin hormone is the most significant advancement in diabetes research since the discovery of insulin a century ago. The hepatalin hormone was discovered in 1996 by Dr. W. Wayne Lutt, SciMar's co-founder and Chief Scientific Officer.

The discovery was made while Dr. Lutt was a professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics at the University of Manitoba, and Dr. Gray draws a parallel between Dr. Lutt's story and the story of the University of Manitoba academics who developed canola in the 1970s: both scientific discoveries with global implications.



Dr. Jerry Gray: "This will be huge for medical research, huge for diabetics, and huge for Manitoba. I'm very optimistic."

At the age of 80, Dr. Gray is no longer making major financial investments, but has been talking up SciMar since meeting with Lutt, and is impressed by the investors who have already come to the table—especially Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation in Manitoba.

“The rates of type 2 diabetes are incredibly high among Indigenous people, especially in the north,” says Dr. Gray. “I’m very pleased that this community invested in SciMar as one way to address the problem.”

Dr. Gray himself is one of 537,000,000 people in the world living with diabetes, of whom 90 percent have type 2. He appreciates the scale of the problem, and the enormity of the opportunity for SciMar.

“I am not a scientist, but this does seem to be the next big discovery,” he says. “This will be huge for medical research, huge for diabetics, and huge for Manitoba. I’m very optimistic.”

By: Stu Slayen



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## SCIMAR EXPLORES USE OF NOVEL FINANCIAL INSTRUMENT

MARCH 25, 2022

In 2017, a group of 17 U.K. institutional investors were repaid in full with a 3% per-annum return on an investment made in 2010. Around the same time, the city of Peterborough reported a 9% reduction of re-offending among short-term prisoners released from Her Majesty's Prison in Peterborough.

A lovely coincidence? Not at all. It was a win-win by design through an instrument known as a social impact bond (SIB). The Peterborough SIB is understood to be the world's first large SIB, having attracted £5 million in funding. It is still touted as a model to emulate when trying to achieve social and community change; and it is a model that is being explored for SciMar's efforts to reduce the incidence and impact of type 2 diabetes through the Wellness Transformation Network.

"At the time, it would have cost the government about \$200,000 per year to put someone back in prison," says Dr. Roy Suddaby of the University of Victoria in British Columbia. The SIB, he explains, funded a program delivered by a non-profit organization to provide people leaving jail with life skills training and other supports, thereby making recidivism less likely. The SIB gave ex-convicts hope and opportunity; made Peterborough safer; and saved the government money, potentially millions of pounds over time. The design of the SIB saw the investors earn their returns from the government. In other words, the government paid for results.

"An SIB gives governments the opportunity to prevent problems as opposed to dealing with them after they arise, and save money in the process," says Dr. Suddaby, an internationally regarded scholar of organizational theory and institutional change. "It's a contract that will pay a benefit to the investor when certain results are achieved. An SIB is a market-based solution to problems that governments typically deal with, and that could include health care."

The terms of the Peterborough SIB were that investors would get paid if the re-offense rate could be cut by 7.5%, a target set by the Ministry of Justice. Dr. Suddaby is currently exploring what metrics would be useful in measuring the impact of SciMar's work, and what the overall design of a wellness SIB could look like. He is hopeful that SciMar, the Wellness Transformation Network, and type 2 diabetes would form a valuable case study that a government, foundation, or corporation would be willing to backstop. He is confident that there will be willing funders. After all, from a full-cost accounting perspective, it is far more expensive to treat someone with type 2 diabetes than to prevent the condition in the first place.

"We've injected tremendous amounts of money into the health care system, but the health care system is really designed to solve problems that already exist, not to prevent them," says Dr. Suddaby. "Through a wellness SIB, we could identify a community that currently has a high incidence of type 2 diabetes and then introduce some skills and education around prevention, including healthy diets, fitness, and stress reduction. We would then measure the results of these interventions based on metrics agreed upon by all parties."



Dr. Roy Suddaby of the University of Victoria: "An SIB gives governments the opportunity to prevent problems as opposed to dealing with them after they arise, and save money in the process."

The metrics could include fewer people being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes over a defined period of time, or perhaps a targeted average improvement in blood sugar as measured by HbA1c testing. If the agreed-upon targets are met and then verified by third parties, SIB investors get paid while people get healthier.

Dr. Suddaby is excited about social impact bonds in general—and a possible collaboration with SciMar in particular—as the popularity of SIBs increases around the world and new lessons are being learned all the time. And he is confident that the concept of an SIB has appeal across the political spectrum, and can engage corporations, foundations, individual investors and philanthropists, and governments.

“Folks on the right would be interested by a potential role for private companies and the use of market-based, measurable solutions, while people on the left side of the spectrum would be interested in new approaches to social change with key roles for government and philanthropic foundations, and a willingness to experiment,” says Dr. Suddaby. “And if a legitimate third party was involved to monitor performance and outcomes, the idea of the social impact bond can appeal to everybody.”

“We’re eager to explore an SIB for SciMar and the Wellness Transformation Network as a way to accelerate our outreach to communities that need help in the fight against type 2 diabetes,” says Mick Lutt, SciMar’s Chief Executive Officer. “I am also excited that an effective SIB program would provide meaningful data and generate a sound financial return, too. It is important for us to innovate, accelerate, and grow. We’re grateful for Dr. Suddaby’s guidance and expertise.”

By: Stu Slayen



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## A 33-DOLLAR BOWL OF FRUIT

CHOOSING GOOD HEALTH IN NORTHERN MANITOBA

FEBRUARY 25, 2022

About five years ago, Ted Bland's doctor told him it was time to start taking insulin injections to keep his type 2 diabetes under control. Bland said no and told his doctor he would return in two weeks.

Bland—who was Chief of York Factory First Nation at the time—went home to do some online research and ordered a book called *7 Steps to Health: The Big Diabetes Lie*. “The book was life-changing for me,” he says. “I learned a lot of different things about diet and its impact on type 2 diabetes.”

He read the book in just two days and changed his eating habits immediately. He cut out sugar, white flour, margarine, and other processed foods and instead ate more fruits and vegetables. He also stopped taking his diabetes medication and his blood pressure medication. As promised, he returned to his doctor two weeks later.

The doctor checked Bland's blood sugar. It was 6.9 mmol/L, well within the normal range of 5–10 and far below the 14 than Bland had measured on his previous visit.

The doctor was impressed and more than a little surprised, but still thought Bland should start taking insulin injections. Again, Bland said no to insulin, and yes to continued healthy living: fruits, vegetables, superfood supplements, daily exercise, and twice-daily meditation.

“I know it can be done; I have good discipline. I know what it takes to do it. But it can be very hard to maintain,” says Bland.

This is especially true in a First Nation where diabetes is rampant. According to Diabetes Canada, “age-standardized prevalence rates for diabetes are 17.2% among First Nations individuals living on-reserve, 10.3% among First Nations individuals living off-reserve, and 7.3% among Métis people.” This is compared to 5.0% of the Canadian population as a whole. Current models for Manitoba suggest that First Nations children are 25 times more likely to be diagnosed with type 2 diabetes than non-Indigenous children. It is nothing short of a crisis, and Bland points to the poor availability of affordable healthy food as a key culprit.

“I went to our store and took a close look at the prices and I was awestruck. There was a bowl of blueberries, grapes, and cut up strawberries that was 33 dollars. It wasn't even that big,” says Bland. “Everything that was healthy was super expensive, and everything that contributes to diabetes—like pop,



Former York Factory First Nation Chief Ted Bland: “The challenges we face are so great that something like what SciMar is doing could really make a significant change in what's happening in our communities.”



Overpriced fruit at Ted Bland's community store: “I went to our store and took a close look at the prices and I was awestruck.”

chips, and chocolate bars—was cheap. It seems like those items are subsidized; they don't increase in price. This is why we're all destined to become diabetics. The business infrastructure has made the cost of living and eating well far too high. It is a challenge we face as Indigenous people.”

The root causes of the healthy food crisis lie in the legacies of colonization, the residential school system, and racism.

“Our nations were forced to do things in certain ways. The authorities took everything away from us and said ‘this is how you live; this is what you eat’,” says Bland, whose mother was taken away from her home in York Factory when she was five and placed in a residential school near Brandon. “There were times when people couldn’t leave the reserves without permission to get traditional foods and medicines, and we were forced to live with store-bought products that weren’t part of our original societies. Our traditional livelihoods—hunting, trapping, fishing, all the ways that we used to sustain ourselves—were jeopardized.” The effects are still being felt today, with a lack of mental health resources, dietary education, and fitness programs.

Bland recognizes that change—both at the personal level and the systemic level—can be slow and difficult, but sees “flickering lights of hope” when organizations and communities work together to make change. He points to SciMar and its Wellness Transformation Network as potentially important contributors to a transformation in Indigenous health.

“I had the opportunity to meet Mick Lutt (SciMar’s CEO) a while ago,” says Bland. “Mick understands what the real challenges are for Indigenous people, and he’s worked with several Indigenous organizations. SciMar has an understanding of what is actually causing the diabetes aside from food intake.”

SciMar’s novel science points to the hormone hepatalin, which is produced by the liver, as the basis for a new understanding of type 2 diabetes. As a community leader and someone who has personally addressed type 2 diabetes, Bland is learning more about SciMar’s science, its business, and its community outreach.

“There’s definitely hope,” says Bland. “The challenges we face are so great that something like what SciMar is doing could really make a significant change in what’s happening in our communities.”

By: Stu Slayen



After just two weeks of healthy eating, Ted Bland’s blood sugar levels were well within the normal range.



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## A MANDATE TO INNOVATE

### FITNESS CENTRE CEO REFLECTS ON PARTICIPATION IN THE WELLNESS TRANSFORMATION NETWORK

JULY 7, 2020

It's hard to believe that less than 50 years ago, most physicians discouraged exercise for patients recovering from heart surgery. Bed rest was recommended. Exercise could be dangerous, went the conventional wisdom of the day. Oh, how the times have changed.

The Reh-Fit Centre opened its doors in 1979 on Taylor Avenue in Winnipeg with renowned cardiologist Dr. David Mymin serving as its first Medical Director. He believed—and could demonstrate empirically and anecdotally—that cardiac patients were much better off with exercise than without.

“In those days exercise was not the key focus for rehabilitation,” says Sue Boreskie, Chief Executive Officer of the Reh-Fit Centre. “But Dr. Mymin and some others intuitively knew that it didn't make sense to have people being sedentary for weeks on end after a heart incident. And they set out to prove it.”

As a master's student in exercise physiology and as an employee of the Reh-Fit Centre in the early 1980s, Boreskie had a front-row seat to the evolution of a new paradigm in cardiac care. Today, as CEO of the first organization to join SciMar's Wellness Transformation Network (WTN), she enjoys a front-row seat to the evolution of a new paradigm in diabetes detection, prevention, and management.

“The innovative thinking that sparked the new approach to exercise absolutely shaped my career and my excitement for innovation in health and fitness,” says Borsekie, a former competitive swimmer and a current Board member with the Canada Games Council. “That is why I am so excited about SciMar and about the Reh-Fit Centre being part of the Wellness Transformation Network.”

As a WTN member, the Reh-Fit Centre will host and coordinate wellness interventions that allow SciMar to measure the participants' nutrient partitioning and their production of hepatic insulin-sensitizing substance (HISS). The science behind nutrient partitioning and HISS is what is driving SciMar's groundbreaking research into type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

Boreskie promotes healthy eating and exercise, but recognizes that for many people prioritizing those things is easier said than done. For those people especially, SciMar's research and products could have an important role to play.

“There are the realities of life, like if someone has multiple children and they are taking care of an elderly mother. Life can get complicated,” says Boreskie. “Exercise is not their primary focus right now, right? So our involvement in the Wellness Transformation Network could be very helpful in supporting people like that in other ways.”



Sue Boreskie: “Our work with SciMar and the WTN is absolutely consistent with our desire to find new solutions and new ways to improve health and well-being.”

The Reh-Fit Centre has its roots in Dr. Mymin's 25-square-foot lab at St. Boniface Hospital in 1975. One treadmill and a waiting list to use it. Today, the Reh-Fit Centre is a sparkling 86,000-square foot building, certified as Canada's first medical fitness facility, and a hub of health and wellness innovation for thousands of Winnipeggers of all ages.

"Diet and exercise are part of the picture, and we're also doing important work in the areas of sleep and how people can stick with good habits," says Boreskie. "Our work with SciMar and the WTN is absolutely consistent with our desire to find new solutions and new ways to improve health and well-being. We're excited!"

By: Stu Slayen



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## A SEAT AT THE TABLE

### INFLUENCING INDIGENOUS WELLNESS

APRIL 8, 2022

In 1990, seven Manitoba chiefs representing seven tribal councils each put forward \$25,000 to form [Tribal Councils Investment Group of Manitoba](#) (TCIG), and said: “Let’s try and do what we can for our communities and try not to be broke by the end of the year.”

“So with that money, it really was their first attempt at getting to the economic table of Canada, and starting to build businesses and looking for opportunities to join into the infrastructure of Canada’s economy,” says Heather Berthelette, TCIG’s Chief Executive Officer.

There have been many successes along the way, and some challenges, too. TCIG has invested in about 20 companies over the years, and is currently refocusing itself on its next stages of growth. “We are reconnecting with our original vision and finding out what success means through an Indigenous world view,” says Berthelette.

That vision and the next steps forward include a distinct emphasis on matters related to health and wellness for the 150,000 First Nations people represented by TCIG’s founding tribal councils. Marketed as “Spirit 92”, TCIG is distributing a line of medical products—like gauze and personal protective equipment—across Canada. The name is derived from the 92nd Call to Action advanced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which calls for “building respectful relationships” with Indigenous communities in advancing businesses in Canada.

The relationship between economic success and wellness is a vital lens for TCIG and its initiatives.

“I was visiting one of our communities and learned that the unemployment rate was 85 percent,” says Derek Risbey, a pharmacist and diabetes educator with TCIG’s [Spirit Healthcare Group](#). “There’s a definite link between social and economic factors and health. People with economic challenges, limited access to health care, and limited access to healthy food have a higher incidence of diabetes and other chronic health conditions. It’s this vicious cycle that can just turn and turn and turn, that’s made even worse when you’re also talking about the remoteness of the north.”

“When you’re facing poverty, and when you’re facing generational trauma, your own health is not the same priority that it otherwise would be,” says Berthelette. “These things really don’t line up with the ability to put a strong focus on a healthy lifestyle. And food sovereignty is a whole other issue. But even before we get to those, the very basics of how you wake up in the morning dictates what your priorities are going to be. And their priority can’t always be a healthy lifestyle.”

It’s no wonder that rates of type 2 diabetes are so high among Indigenous people in northern Manitoba. It’s a problem that TCIG wants to help solve, and a relationship with SciMar and the [Wellness Transformation Network](#) offers a hopeful avenue.



Heather Berthelette and Derek Risbey: “We could have a major impact on health for the next 50 years and beyond,” says Berthelette.

“Diabetes has been such a fight for our Indigenous population. And we have always been users of a system that we have not been allowed to participate in. We’re not influencers because we’re not at the economic table. And, you know, the health care products industry has a 150-year head start on us,” says Berthelette, who is closely considering an investment in SciMar through TCIG. “We don’t want to be left behind another 150 years. And we don’t just want to be sampling targets. We want a seat at the table; we want to be influencers. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder with companies and decision-makers.”

Berthelette is optimistic that an investment in SciMar could change the conversation about type 2 diabetes in northern Manitoba. She sees partnership with SciMar as an opportunity to help people overcome the shame that is often associated with a type 2 diabetes diagnosis; an opportunity to empower individuals and communities to take charge of their wellness; and an opportunity to help inspire healthy living through an Indigenous world view.

“I’m optimistic that if we are consulted and if we are investors that were equals at the table, we could have a major impact on health for the next 50 years and beyond,” says Berthelette.

“We’re very excited at the prospect of welcoming TCIG as an investor in SciMar,” says Mick Lutt, SciMar’s CEO. “As with all of our relationships with the Indigenous community, we are mindful of the need to welcome the community’s economic insights and their traditional knowledge as we tackle type 2 diabetes through our research. We are excited to welcome TCIG as a partner, co-creator, influencer, and advisor.”

By: Stu Slayen



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## CHANGING THE WORLD

### SCIMAR INVESTOR EXCITED BY THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF HISS

JULY 25, 2019

Seven grandchildren. Five acres. Two horses. One grand plan to help improve global health.

These are the numbers on Trudy Steiner's mind these days after nearly 40 years of crunching the numbers at Steiner Plumbing & Heating, the company she co-owned with her husband, Jim.

In retirement, Steiner tends to her hydrangeas and hostas on her acreage just west of Dauphin, Manitoba; visits her grandchildren in Edmonton, Ottawa, and Dauphin; and takes care of her Appaloosa horses. She also follows the progress of SciMar, in which she invested in 2018.

"When you invest in something, you of course want it to be successful," says Steiner, a former nurse. "For me, though, it's bigger than that. I think we have a great opportunity to make a difference for people with type 2 diabetes."

The Steiners were among the many Dauphinites who invested in SciMar's seed round. They were attracted by the compelling science behind hepatic insulin-sensitizing substance (HISS) and the potential of the discovery of this hormone to lead to new strategies to prevent, manage, and possibly even reverse type 2 diabetes.

"As a nurse, I saw the impact of diabetes on patients. I understand what is going on in the body of a diabetic," said Steiner. "We need a better way to manage diabetes to help people live more normal lives. The burden on the health care system is severe. I'm optimistic that we are looking at the solution with SciMar's work."

Science aside, Steiner was also inspired to invest by her confidence in SciMar's Chief Executive Officer, Mick Lautt.

"Mick is very energetic and whatever he does, he does it full tilt, whether in business or with his community service in Dauphin," says Steiner. "He doesn't sit back and wait for things to happen. He makes things happen. He's driven to see this project through, make it work, and make people's lives better. I'm proud to be a part of this as an investor.

"HISS is such an amazing discovery," she adds. "We can change the world."

By: Stu Slayen



Jim and Trudy Steiner: "As a nurse, I saw the impact of diabetes on patients," says Trudy.

## CHICKEN AND EGG

### THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND CHRONIC DISEASE

FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Do depression and anxiety lead to chronic physical disease, or does having a chronic disease lead to depression and anxiety?

It could be either or both, according to Sara Jordan: “It’s chicken and egg.”

Jordan, Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association’s Calgary Region, says that if someone is dealing with situational or chronic depression, they might be less motivated to exercise, eat well, and socialize, and perhaps more likely to smoke or abuse substances, which would ultimately have negative physical impacts. Similarly, if someone has a chronic illness, like type 2 diabetes, they might become depressed and lose the ability to take steps to improve their health. A vicious cycle ensues.

“I don’t think you can have a chronic disease or condition and not experience depression,” she says

The link between mental health and physical wellness is backed by science. In fact, says Jordan, there are now even psychiatric clinical practice guidelines in some jurisdictions that prescribe exercise for patients.

The logic would suggest then, if you treat people’s mental health issues, you could disrupt the progression to physical illness; conversely, if you get the body healthy, you can avert mental health challenges.

For Jordan, it’s about seeing people holistically, and that is why she is excited about SciMar’s Wellness Transformation Network (WTN) initiative which will coordinate, oversee, and measure the impact of a variety of lifestyle interventions for non-profit health organizations, commercial workplaces, and Indigenous communities—through the lens of SciMar’s breakthrough science.

“I think the Wellness Transformation Network is amazing and I think it’s the way to go,” she says. “Finding ways to prevent disease is good for mental health, it’s good for the economy, and it’s good for the health care system. Speaking for myself, I don’t think our health care system is sustainable for the long term and we know that 60% of chronic diseases are preventable; and we know that healthy people are productive people. What SciMar is doing can have a wide-ranging impact.”

As a mental health advocate, Jordan thinks the time is right to shine a bright light on depression, anxiety, and other conditions, given the impact COVID-19 has been having on people’s emotional well-being. At CMHA Calgary, she is seeing a significant uptick in requests for service and referrals.

“A survey was done here recently that showed that 72% of Albertans are reporting feeling increased levels of sadness, depression, and anxiety, specifically related to COVID,” she says. “That is significant; that is



Sara Jordan of CMHA: “I think the Wellness Transformation Network is amazing and I think it’s the way to go. Finding ways to prevent disease is good for mental health.”

most people. And that number only represents the number of people willing to acknowledge how they are feeling.”

The upside, perhaps, is that people are becoming more open to talking about mental health and recognizing the importance of holistic wellness and community well-being.

For Jordan, a key upside of the Wellness Transformation Network is the community nature of the planned lifestyle interventions, citing a “peer support” model that is growing in popularity in mental health care. Having people around you committed to the same goals creates “circles of support” as you work toward mental wellness and lifestyle changes.

Achieving health care success and making change at the individual and societal level takes community commitment, courageous policy-making, and innovative programming, says Jordan.

The Wellness Transformation Network is ready to do its part.

By: Stu Slayen



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## FISHING AND HUNTING

### INVESTING IN SCIENCE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

DECEMBER 17, 2019

When it comes to his leisure time, Terry Cholka likes to fish. When it comes to investing, though, he's more of a hunter.

He hunts for investment opportunities that not only offer the potential of a significant return, but are also poised to make a difference in the world. All the better if the values of the company he is investing in align with his own. For Cholka, who lives in a home he is building at the base of Riding Mountain in Manitoba's Parkland Region, all the pieces came together with SciMar. He made a significant investment in the summer of 2019.

"When Mick (Lautt, SciMar's CEO) started telling me about SciMar and what they were doing, I could see that not only was there potential from an investment standpoint, but there was a potential benefit for our own community and the world," says Cholka. "An improvement in human health and major steps in the battle against type 2 diabetes would benefit everyone."

Cholka and Lautt were introduced by a mutual friend in the Dauphin area. Cholka was eager to meet Lautt because, as it turned out, the two are neighbours. But he also wanted to meet because of the positive "rumblings" he was hearing about SciMar throughout Dauphin, home to SciMar's head office and most of the company's early investors.

"I could see almost immediately Mick's passion in SciMar as well as his professionalism and commitment to the community. It was clear we shared similar values," says Cholka of his first meeting with Lautt. "I was impressed by how open he was with information and how passionate he was about what SciMar is trying to accomplish."

And so, Cholka undertook his own personal, rigorous vetting process. He examined SciMar's materials and its numbers, and studied information about the pharmaceutical industry and pharmaceutical approval processes. He liked what he learned.

"I certainly felt that there was enough there to justify the investment," says Cholka, whose late father lived with diabetes. "The opportunity to contribute to a positive change in global health far outweighed any investment risk. This is an investment in the health of all families, including my own."

For Cholka, family is a key ingredient to a happy and purposeful life. In fact, the 54-year-old has started winding down the farm that has been in his family for four generations so he can spend more time with family—including a son who lives with autism—and spend more time fishing, camping, and contributing to society as an informed and engaged angel investor.

"I had told my kids that before I turned 50 I wanted a direction from them about whether any of them wanted to carry on the farm," says Cholka. "They all chose a different path."

Tetra Farms, Cholka's business, sold off a piece of the farm to a young couple from out of province eager



SciMar investor Terry Cholka: "The opportunity to contribute to a positive change in global health far outweighed any investment risk."

to start farming in Manitoba. There is a leasing arrangement in place for the rest of the farm and its equipment for now, with a complete transition in the works. Cholka stays involved as an advisor, visiting the farm about once a month. “It’s difficult getting into farming, but it’s just as difficult getting out,” he laughs.

His main focus in the short term is to finish building his new home. His longer-term goal is to build a better world through investment.

“In my mind, everyone has gifts to share. I look at my son and his autism. His gift is to teach people tolerance,” reflects Cholka. “The gift I share is my ability to help companies like SciMar make a difference by investing in them. SciMar’s gift is the potential of their research to change global health. There is a multiplication effect at work here and I am glad to be a part of it. I care about the future.”

By: Stu Slayen



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## HE HAD ME AT “HELLO”

### SCIMAR INVESTMENT CONSULTANT REFLECTS ON A MADE-IN-MANITOBA MATCH

MAY 21, 2021

It takes mere moments for two Manitobans meeting for the first time to figure out who they know in common. It's faster than a Google search, some would say. For SciMar CEO Mick Lutt and Charles (Chuck) LaFlèche, it was even faster than that when they sat down together for the first time in 2017.

“A mutual connection suggested we meet. I happened to be in Brandon on business and Mick of course is in Dauphin, which isn't too far away. So, we met for coffee in Brandon and just hit it off,” says LaFlèche, President and CEO of Golden Arrow Life Sciences in Winnipeg. “We figured out right away that our families were both connected to Camp Stephens (a YMCA summer camp).”

After another few minutes of playing who's who in Manitoba, the gentlemen figured out that Lutt had once provided leadership training services for AIS, an e-learning firm that spun off from Momentum Healthcare, a software company founded by LaFlèche.

LaFlèche left the meeting amused about what a small world this is. But he also left with new insights on what a big problem type 2 diabetes is, and a strong feeling that SciMar was poised to make a difference. The science was novel and compelling, and the company was much more advanced from a business perspective than he had expected.

“I was impressed by Mick's determination and SciMar's stick-to-itiveness,” adds LaFlèche. “To hear Mick's pitch is to feel optimistic about the future of human health. He wanted me to invest and to roll up my sleeves to help out. He had me at 'hello.'”

LaFlèche is a keen observer of Canada's health care system. In addition to founding a health informatics company, he served as the President & CEO of a hospital foundation before launching Golden Arrow Life Sciences to help researchers and academic institutions commercialize their discoveries. He also provides fundraising support for charitable organizations in health and community services.

“What I've seen throughout my career is that Canada's record of bringing the best science to market where it can truly help people is dismal,” says LaFlèche, who sat on the Conference Board of Canada's National Council of Foundation Executives. “SciMar is different. They stuck with the science and proved their hypotheses in the lab and were preparing for clinical trials. That's what struck me. On top of that, they had negotiated good technology transfer agreements and secured the patents on their intellectual property. They were thoughtful and diligent, they were focused on removing risks, and they always knew that to bring hepatic insulin-sensitizing substance (the HISS hormone) to the world, they needed to be market-ready. Their approach is impressive.”

LaFlèche cites examples of European universities earning millions of Euros a year in royalties for successful discoveries that took root in their labs, money that is re-invested into more research. And he is impressed by how U.S. universities have given birth to so many world-leading technologies and medicines.



Charles (Chuck) LaFlèche, FCPA, FCMA: “What's the point in making a discovery if you have no way of using that discovery to make a difference?”



“We have work to do here in Canada. We need to encourage, build, and nurture an entrepreneurial spirit in academia and in our teaching hospitals,” he says. “What’s the point in making a discovery if you have no way of using that discovery to make a difference?”

For SciMar, the point of discovery is clear—to change the global health paradigm in the prevention, detection, and treatment of type 2 diabetes. It’s a point that LaFlèche is proud to make when he talks to potential investors about the SciMar opportunity.

“There is clearly something missing in how the world understands type 2 diabetes,” he says. “The number of cases is going up, not down. The challenge is particularly profound for our Indigenous brothers and sisters in Manitoba and across Canada. The need is pressing and the market is huge.”

When not telling the SciMar story, consulting with others, or raising funds for charity, you might find LaFlèche on the golf course, playing with his granddaughter, working out, or watching his favourite sports teams in action. Ask nicely, and he’ll do an uncanny Elvis impersonation, and he can tell you who scored the series-winning goal in every Stanley Cup final going back to the earliest playoffs. He’s also a history buff with a remarkable memory for important dates (he notes that his own ancestors first arrived in Quebec on August 18, 1665, although, to his chagrin, he is not certain what time of day).

While LaFlèche loves talking history, right now as SciMar’s Investment Consultant he is more interested in making history.

“SciMar is a story of a perseverance, hard work, and sophistication,” he says. “I’m confident that our work here will make a difference for humanity and change the way breakthroughs become businesses capable of improving people’s lives.”

By: Stu Slayen



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## FOR THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE WORLD

CHIEF MARCEL MOODY REFLECTS ON HIS COMMUNITY'S INVESTMENT IN SCIMAR

FEBRUARY 11, 2020

*The following is an edited transcript of a speech delivered by Chief Marcel Moody on December 7, 2019, at a SciMar investor event. Chief Moody is the leader of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) in Manitoba.*

Thank you for the introduction and good afternoon everyone.

I want to tell you about a picture in my mind that I'll never be able to erase. Years ago I was visiting a friend in the hospital in Thompson. From the other side of the curtain, the other patient in the room said: "Hey Marcel! Is that you?"

I didn't know who it was, but obviously that person recognized my voice. I pulled back the curtain and there was my old broomball buddy, Hubert. I hadn't seen him in years. He greeted me from his bed with his big smile, but he couldn't wave or shake my hand. That's because both of his arms had been amputated. Both of his legs, too. And he was blind. Hubert was another casualty of the type 2 diabetes epidemic.

It's hard to find a family in my community, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, that hasn't been touched by this disease. My own wife, Marie, has been successfully managing her diabetes for 32 years. For many others, that journey is even more disruptive, more painful, and more frightening. For some, it includes travelling to Thompson, 90 kilometres away, two or three times a week to get dialysis as their kidneys are failing.

As SciMar investors, we all know that this disease is growing in prominence and affecting many people in Manitoba and the world. Simply put, type 2 diabetes is a crisis in Manitoba's north and it's getting worse.

When we met with Mick Lutt (SciMar's CEO), we learned about SciMar's science and about the investment opportunity. We paid attention. From a health perspective, we are eager for a new approach, a new direction. We need better outcomes for people who have this disease and we need better strategies and tools for preventing the disease in the first place. SciMar really impressed us from a health perspective. It also impressed us as an investment. And so, in partnership with the NCN Family and Community Wellness Centre, our nation invested in SciMar.

At NCN, we're working very hard to strengthen our community's infrastructure and economy for our children and grandchildren. And so we take our business and investment decisions very seriously. We are partners with Manitoba Hydro in the Wuskwatim generating station. We own a grocery store in Thompson and in Opaskwayak Cree Nation. We own a hotel and a gas station in Thompson. We've invested in cannabis. We're involved in many other ventures.

On the infrastructure side, we recently completed the construction of a women's shelter and \$9 million multiplex. And we're building a new high school and a new water treatment plant among many other projects in our community.



Chief Marcel Moody: "To develop successfully as a community, we need a strong economic base. And even more important, we need a healthy population."

To develop successfully as a community, we need a strong economic base. And even more important, we need a healthy population. You can make all of these investments, but if there are no people to support the investment, then it's useless, right? So a key to the strength of our First Nation is economic development, but we also have a social conscience and that's why it was so important for us to invest with SciMar.

We see our relationship with SciMar as a key contributor to the achievement of our objectives. We are hopeful, we are optimistic, we're excited, and we're eager for a new reality in the fight against type 2 diabetes for communities in Manitoba and for people everywhere.

I think it's an exciting opportunity for our nation, for our people. We hope that this research is going to be finished as soon as possible because I've heard that eight out of 10 people in this world are going to be affected by diabetes.

This is a tremendous economic growth opportunity for us. More importantly, I think we can find a cure so people don't have to suffer. So, I'm glad that we are part of the investment and I'm excited to be part of this process and hopefully things happen quickly. So with that, thank you for listening to my presentation and good luck to the research team. Thank you.



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## FROM ALLY TO CO-CONSPIRATOR

SEEKING PROGRESS THROUGH DIVERSITY

JANUARY 28, 2022

“Wellness is not just a biomedical issue,” says Toni Tilston-Jones, SciMar’s Diversity Consultant. “We need to see wellness through the lens of who people are and the historical and current environments they live in.”

Easier said than done, of course, but the important thing is that diversity, equity, and inclusion are on the agenda of a growing number of companies and organizations. And many companies, like SciMar, are trying to be more than allies to diverse communities. They are trying to become “co-conspirators”, a term that is gaining traction of late.

In other words, going beyond words and taking tangible steps to make change and be inclusive.

“To be an ally is to offer support to systemically marginalized groups, like people of colour, Indigenous people, queer folk, trans folk, people with disabilities, and others. Being an ally means walking beside these groups,” says Tilston-Jones, a social worker by training. “Being a co-conspirator means going beyond being an ally. It means using your power and privilege, taking risks, and taking meaningful action without co-opting work already being done.”

Getting into that place, says Tilston-Jones, starts at a personal level and looking within ourselves.

“I have to do my own work, decolonize my own self, understand my own social location, my own power, my own privilege,” she says. “I’m queer, so I identify as gay, but I’m also white, and I’m economically privileged. So how do those things impact the way that I see and experience the world, and then how does that relate to the work that I do on a daily basis? And how can I use my power and privilege to break down the systemic barriers?”

On a daily basis, Tilston-Jones is the Executive Director of Youville Community Health Centre, a Winnipeg agency that encompasses Youville Diabetes Centre. Her agency serves many marginalized people, and many Indigenous people battling type 2 diabetes. Many of the people served by Youville are economically challenged, and often need to choose between medication and food, a poverty resulting from intergenerational trauma and the effects of colonization and the residential school system. When that level of poverty and isolation enter the picture, we need to look at what wellness means far beyond what someone’s bloodwork shows.



Toni Tilston-Jones

Toni Tilston-Jones: SciMar is “...an example of a company prepared to do things differently, leverage the strengths of everyone around the table, have a positive impact in the world, and still be a successful business.”

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“Organizations need to be designed in a way that’s inclusive of all of those things. That means looking at policies, structures, training and development, recruitment—everything in an organization has to be looked at through those lenses so that we are not just running organizations based on what works for white, male, non-disabled people,” she says. “We kind of have to bust it up and, and then include diverse voices, centre those voices, and then actually make the changes.” For many organizations, she says, it can get “pretty messy to talk about power and privilege, but that discomfort should not stop organizations from doing it.”

For SciMar, a relatively young company that was born of a desire to use novel science to improve global health, the quest for best practice in diversity, equity, and inclusion is imperative. How will SciMar ensure that clinical trials are sensitive to various demographic groups? How will Wellness Transformation Network programming be co-created with Indigenous communities and other groups to ensure that they are culturally sensitive and inclusive? How will SciMar ensure that its work takes Gender-based Analysis Plus and other anti-oppressive processes into consideration? How will the company work with partners to ensure that the therapies it develops can be accessible to all people who need them?

“I think SciMar has an important opportunity here because they are showing through the Wellness Transformation Network that they can bring people together across sectors and across identities to achieve common goals,” says Tilston-Jones. “They are an example of a company prepared to do things differently, leverage the strengths of everyone around the table, have a positive impact in the world, and still be a successful business.”

As a learning organization committed to best practice in all of its operations and the authentic pursuit of global wellness, there can be no other way forward in 2022 and beyond.

“Everyone in the corporate world is talking about diversity, equity, and inclusion. We want to take it beyond talk and make sure that our work truly reflects these values,” says SciMar CEO Mick Lutt. “Toni is an expert in the field and is able to see diversity, equity, and inclusion through a health and wellness lens. Her guidance is invaluable.”

By: *Stu Slayen*



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## FRONT ROW SEAT

### CAMPFIRE CONVERSATIONS AND INVESTOR CONFIDENCE

SEPTEMBER 25, 2020

As a video production student in 1998, Sam Hofer shot a short video of Dr. W. Wayne Lutt in his University of Manitoba lab talking about his liver research and type 2 diabetes.

“I think he just had one of his breakthroughs,” recalls Hofer, a Vancouver-based information technology product manager. “He was really excited to talk about his findings.”

It wasn't Hofer's first exposure to Dr. Lutt's science. In his teens, he lived a block and a half away from the Lutt family in Winnipeg's River Heights neighbourhood. As a friend of Mick Lutt (son of Wayne and SciMar's CEO), Hofer spent a great deal of time in the Lutt home and at their family cottage in Northwestern Ontario.

“We used to sit around the campfire and Wayne would talk about his research, and the effects of type 2 diabetes,” recalls Hofer. “I remember him talking about the unique impacts of diabetes on Indigenous communities, which really spoke to me.”

Hofer, a member of the Temagami First Nation, has seen the impacts of type 2 diabetes in his community and in his family. His mother has the disease, so does his uncle, so did his late grandmother, and so does Hofer himself.

“I moved to Florida for work and my lifestyle changed. I ballooned to 330 pounds and became prediabetic,” says Hofer. “My doctor didn't offer any interventions or advice; he just wanted to monitor me. By 2006, I had a diagnosis of type 2.”

Hofer has since lost 80 pounds and his disease is under control with exercise and medications, including medications to prevent heart disease that is often closely associated with type 2 diabetes. That said, he regrets that he didn't get better medical advice and support when he was first diagnosed with prediabetes. “Whenever I look back, yes, that was a big misstep by the doctor,” says Hofer.

He soon returned to Canada and resumed his work, tackling major IT projects for B.C. Lotteries, Telus, EA Sports, and other major companies. He approaches his work not as a technology expert (which he is), but as someone whose job it is to create outstanding experiences for people. “Technology is just the tool,” says Hofer, 47.

To enhance his skills, Hofer enrolled in the MBA program at Simon Fraser University just a few years ago. Around the same time, SciMar was starting to seek investors to advance the company's research and product development. Hofer was interested and decided to perform a formal six-step valuation of SciMar using his newly acquired skills. The numbers checked out, says Hofer, and the market was huge. But what really convinced him to become an early investor was the quality of people running the company.



Sam Hofer: “We used to sit around the campfire and Wayne would talk about his research.”

“When you perform a valuation, you look at the company’s leadership and ask yourself if they are trustworthy and if they can deliver,” Hofer says. “Hearing Wayne’s passion for the science all those years and knowing Mick the way I did, I knew it was a good investment.”

To make sure he was making an objective decision, and not one only based on his respect for the Lutt family, Hofer invited two fellow MBA colleagues to review SciMar’s materials. They supported Hofer’s decision to invest. Nearly three years later, Hofer remains excited about the impact the company can have.

“SciMar’s products will help those at risk of developing type 2 diabetes and provide better treatment to those who already have it,” he says. “I’m excited to be on this journey with SciMar to improve health outcomes and to potentially realize a significant financial return on my investment. Solving type 2 diabetes is very important to me.”

By: Stu Slayen



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## IT'S ALL ABOUT WELLNESS

### CELEBRATING CELL CULTURE AND LAB CULTURE

OCTOBER 21, 2019

It's been said that good research is a marathon, not a sprint. But as long as any sort of running is involved, Dr. Victoria Sid is happy to be a part of it.

For Dr. Sid, a Research Associate in SciMar's lab, her work and her life are all about pursuing and achieving wellness for the world, and for herself. She is a fitness fanatic who makes her way to the gym five days a week, and she participates in at least three 10k runs a year.

"Running helps reduce stress and it keeps me healthy," says the life-long Winnipegger. "I also eat well and do my best to stay relaxed." For leisure and relaxation, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, as well as watching movies and TV shows.

Her fitness and diet regimen keep Dr. Sid sharp for her very detailed work for SciMar. She wears two hats at the lab, working on preclinical studies as well as experiments on the molecular biology side. Her current work involves growing rat skeletal muscle cells which can be utilized as an *in vitro* model (meaning outside of the living organism) to investigate the signalling mechanism of hepatic insulin-sensitizing substance (HISS), the hormone at the heart of SciMar's research.

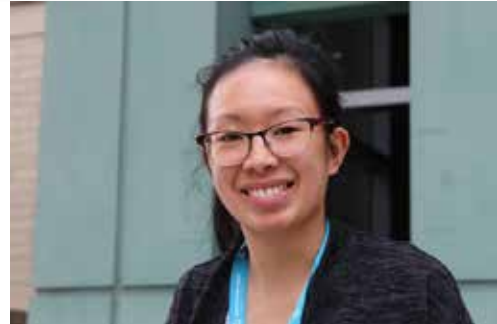
"I can treat the cells with various compounds, inhibitors, and activators to analyze what's involved in the production of HISS and observe its effect on glucose uptake and insulin sensitivity," she says. "We can look at many different variations. That's the powerful thing about the cell culture model."

It takes five to eight days to grow the cells, a period during which Dr. Sid takes meticulous notes and records her observations and ideas for the next round of experimentation. Her keen observational skills and attention to even the smallest details were honed while working on her PhD in Physiology and Pathophysiology at the University of Manitoba from where she graduated in 2018. Her 11-year journey as a student was punctuated by 12-hour days as she produced her thesis on the role of folate in non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

"Investigating the underlying causes of metabolic disorders and exploring potential therapeutic strategies was intriguing and very exciting to me," says Dr. Sid in explaining her choice of thesis topic and career. "I like to learn why things work the way they do."

Dr. Sid's aunt in China—where rates of type 2 diabetes are skyrocketing—was recently diagnosed with the disease. "Being able to share my knowledge about health and wellness with family and friends is very important to me," says Dr. Sid.

As clinical trials proceed and the case for viewing type 2 diabetes through a HISS lens is further strengthened, Dr. Sid and her colleagues believe that their work will have a significant impact on enhancing the current knowledge of the disease. That said, they keep their enthusiasm in check.



Dr. Victoria Sid: "As scientists, we have to keep level-headed."



“The culture in the lab is great. We’re excited about what we are accomplishing and it’s an exciting environment to work in, but we stay focused,” says Dr. Sid. “As scientists, we have to keep level-headed. We can’t get too excited by a promising result the first time we see it. We have to stay calm, confirm our findings, and then confirm them again. That said, we are optimistic that our research will eventually lead to a promising therapeutic treatment and reduce the burden of type 2 diabetes. I really like our progress.”

By: *Stu Slayen*



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## IT'S ALL CONNECTED

REFLECTING ON THE INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE IN CANADA

DECEMBER 1, 2021

In May 2021, Canadians took notice when the story of the remains of 215 children in unmarked graves on the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School made the news. Flags were lowered, voices were raised. To non-Indigenous Canadians, the grave sites in Kamloops and elsewhere have been called “discoveries”. To Indigenous peoples, though, these sites have always been known, shared through the generations by “whispering truth.”

From coast-to-coast, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians alike have been wondering what this moment in time will mean for the process of reconciliation and the future of Canada. Jennefer Nepinak, SciMar’s Winnipeg-based Community Engagement Consultant, hopes that it marks a turning point in Canadian history.

“I would hope that given our current dialogue nationally, particularly as it relates to residential schools, that we are in a new era of dialogue, because it has to change,” says Nepinak, a lawyer who serves as Associate Vice-President of Indigenous Engagement at the University of Winnipeg. “We cannot go back. We know what we know and things need to change. The status quo is unacceptable, and we need to work with our communities, and identify better ways of moving forward in all aspects of our lives.”

As part of the dialogue, Nepinak wants Canadians to understand that the challenges faced by Indigenous communities today—including the very high rates of type 2 diabetes—all have deep roots in the history of colonization and the residential school system.

“There are so many layers to this conversation,” says Nepinak, a citizen of [Pine Creek First Nation](#) (Treaty #4) in Manitoba. “There have been many pieces of legislation, policies, and programs that have impeded our communities in so many ways, including type 2 diabetes. We talk about socio-economic factors related to housing, access to resources, access to health care, access to the justice system, food security, and more. As far as I’m concerned, again, it goes across the board in terms of living a holistic, healthy life. There are issues in every sector that factor into this diabetes epidemic in our communities. It’s all connected.”

Additionally, she notes, the intergenerational trauma that has resulted from the residential school system has made a holistic sense of wellness difficult to pursue and achieve.

Nepinak knows this first-hand. Her own mother, who battled alcoholism, was murdered in a hotel room when young Jennefer was just seven.



Jennefer Nepinak: “Aniin Bozhoo (Hello)! Animikayaziik Dishinikas (my traditional name is Flying Thunderbird Woman). Makwa Dodem (I am of the Bear Clan). Miinegoziibi Doongi (I am a citizen of Pine Creek First Nation).”

“My mother was a residential school attendee who did not survive,” says Nepinak. “I carry all those wounds; I carry all that grief. And then I transfer that to my kids as I go forward, and they’ll transfer to theirs unless we do the work to heal, which I’m working very hard to do.”

Nepinak is optimistic that SciMar’s [Wellness Transformation Network](#) (WTN) community outreach initiative will play a meaningful role in the healing process, with focused attention on type 2 diabetes as one part of a holistic approach to well-being.

“I don’t think there’s a full understanding of the severity of the diabetes issue within our communities. And it is a very, very severe issue in our communities,” she says. “There is sometimes a lack of understanding and education about the impact type 2 diabetes can have. There’s a whole lot of work that needs to be done to educate people across the board.”

Nepinak is especially excited that WTN programs and lifestyle interventions will be co-created with Indigenous communities. In fact, she says, success isn’t really possible any other way.

“With SciMar and the WTN we are lifting up our communities in a way that provides them with an opportunity to lead the charge. First Nations communities have to be heard, to have our perspectives considered and shared and implemented. We need to be sitting next to you in the driver’s seat or in the driver’s seat. This is the best approach to working with Indigenous communities. The top-down approach just doesn’t work,” says Nepinak. “One of the elders I work with often reminds people that we want to be part of the solutions, that we want to be there, while you’re making the recipe. Don’t come to us with a cooked meal and force feed us! We want to be there with you to chop the vegetables, to put it all together, and to cook it with love and kindness. To me, that’s always been a really good analogy to explain what it is we’re looking for in terms of meaningful relationships. The Wellness Transformation Network is a tremendous opportunity for SciMar to connect with the communities in that way.”

As the dialogue about the impacts of colonization and residential schools continues, the WTN is poised to be a strong partner in the healing process.

By: Stu Slayen

The WTN will launch with a series of lifestyle interventions late in the winter of 2021/2022. A number of First Nations, community groups, and businesses will participate. [Learn more.](#)



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## REAL PROGRESS. REAL POTENTIAL.

### INVESTMENT “CHECKS ALL THE BOXES” FOR JOHNSTON GROUP

OCTOBER 17, 2019

For Johnston Group, a national employee benefits company based in Winnipeg, their significant investment in SciMar this past summer is about purpose as much as it is about profit.

“SciMar’s focus on battling type 2 diabetes and improving community wellness aligns very well with what we are all about as a company,” says Johnston Group President, Dave Angus. “As a benefits company, we see the growing incidence of type 2 diabetes and its impact on people, communities, and the health care system. SciMar wants to solve this and we share their vision.”

For Angus, though, the stability of SciMar as a business, its progress in the lab, and the potential return on investment also figured prominently in the decision to invest.

“When we invest in a business, we absolutely look for opportunities that are shaped by social purpose, but we also want to see a good return,” says Angus. “What is so appealing about SciMar is that they are far down the road in their development. The research they are doing on HISS (hepatic insulin-sensitizing substance) goes back over 20 years and has been validated along the way. From an investment perspective, that is very compelling. We have a pretty significant level of confidence in their people and their ability to deliver.”

As a Manitoba investor in a Manitoba company, Angus is especially proud to be a cheerleader for SciMar.

“We feel an affinity with SciMar and are proud that their work is developing in Manitoba,” says Angus. “We share their values, their province, and their commitment to wellness. Our investment checks all the boxes.”

By: Stu Slayen



WWW.JANZENPHOTO

Johnston Group President, Dave Angus: “We share their values, their province, and their commitment to wellness.”

## RENOVATION AND INNOVATION

### SCIMAR'S DALLAS LEGARE TAKES CARE OF THE DETAILS

SEPTEMBER 3, 2019

In his off hours, you might find Dallas Legare renovating his house or tiling a friend's bathroom. During the day, though, this veteran leader trades in his tool belt for a lab coat.

As SciMar's Director of Laboratory Operations, Legare oversees the administration of the laboratory including the planning, organization, and co-ordination of multiple research projects. This includes the allocation of human and technical resources, budget matters, and serving as SciMar's Quality Assurance Officer, ensuring compliance with regulatory and ethical standards. In other words, it's Legare's job to create and maintain the conditions for discoveries to be made and validated day after day.

Whether he's leading a renovation or supporting innovation, the same principles apply: organization, attention to detail, good humour, and unbridled passion. In the case of SciMar, Legare's passion is shaped by the steady evolution of SciMar's science and the deep belief that the company is positioned to create a major change in global health.

"Our goal is to maintain a culture of discovery and excitement in the lab because we're changing the paradigm where billions of dollars are being spent on diabetes care, but little progress is being made to push back the disease," says Legare. "When you take a look at how far we've moved our research from concept to reality, there is absolutely a sense of excitement."

Legare's career path to laboratory operations was hardly a direct one. Moving from his childhood home in Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, he enrolled in a social work program at a community college in Saskatoon. The idea of social work appealed to him because of his desire to interact and help others. It appeared to be a fitting occupation, however during his practicum he encountered many overworked and stressed-out social workers. Still, he carried on with his studies at the University of Saskatchewan until a government hiring freeze made the news. The prospect of not finding work or living with a stress-filled occupation pushed Legare away from social work and left him wondering what to do next.

He learned about the laboratory technologist program at the Kelsey Institute in Saskatoon and enrolled. One year of course work was followed by a one-year practicum in hospital laboratories. During his practicum, he saw lab work grow increasingly automated, which changed the role of the technologists and made the work less appealing to him.

And so, the job hunt began. The year was 1979. Legare was looking for a challenging laboratory gig where he could interact with the work and the people around him, potentially making a significant contribution. Enter Dr. Wayne Lutt of the University of Saskatchewan.



Dallas Legare takes investors and guests through the SciMar lab: "It's our responsibility to make sure that our enthusiasm doesn't compromise our abilities to think critically, work hard, and do good science."

Dr. Lutt—Founder and current Chief Scientific Officer at SciMar—was looking for a research technologist for his physiology lab. Legare fit the bill, working with Dr. Lutt in Saskatoon until 1984 when Dr. Lutt was recruited to the University of Manitoba. Legare followed without hesitation to help Dr. Lutt set up his lab in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics.

Building on his earlier studies of insulin and the liver, Dr. Lutt and his team made a serendipitous discovery in 1996 that would change his work forever, the discovery of hepatic insulin-sensitizing substance (HISS).

The lab grew to as many as 14 staff and continued to attract funding as Dr. Lutt published his findings. In 2012, though, Dr. Lutt retired from the University of Manitoba and his lab wound down. It was the same year that Legare's wife passed away. Legare stepped back from science, took a deep breath, and spent much of a year doing home renovations before returning to another position at the U of M as the Director of Operations for the Vaccine and Drug Evaluation Centre.

By 2018, it became clear that SciMar, the company that Dr. Lutt founded in 2009, needed to open a lab to accelerate research into HISS and explore ways to take the discovery to the world. Once again, Legare joined Dr. Lutt without hesitation. Working off of his dining room table for the first few months, Legare started to cobble together the pieces to get a new lab off the ground.

By October 2018, the team moved into its lab at St. Boniface Hospital's Albrechtsen Research Centre. Each day brings the team closer to commercializing the products that will open a new frontier in the battle against type 2 diabetes. In August 2019, a major milestone was reached when Health Canada approved SciMar's most recent clinical trial plan, a success due in no small part to Legare's navigation of the complicated ethical requirements and application processes.

As SciMar gets closer and closer to major announcements and launches, Legare keeps his excitement in check.

"There hasn't been one single a-ha moment," says Legare, a father of two adult children. "Since 1996 it has been a steady trajectory of learning and discovery. We know that what we are working on will soon help millions of people. It's our responsibility to make sure that our enthusiasm doesn't compromise our abilities to think critically, work hard, and do good science."

By: Stu Slayen

## “SCIENCE WINS”

PODCAST HOST DAN RISKIN REFLECTS ON SCIENCE AND STORYTELLING

FEBRUARY 18, 2021

In December 2020, Dan Riskin interviewed University of Alberta Professor and Nobel Laureate Michael Houghton, who co-discovered hepatitis-C in 1989.

“What do we know about hepatitis-C that we could apply to COVID-19?” asked Riskin, a U of A alum and prominent science journalist.

Houghton’s answer stuck with Riskin: “He said ‘No, no. What do we learn from COVID that I can apply to hep-C?’ Look at the latest developments in any field, he said, and figure out how to apply that to what you’re working on. He’s going to look for the new technology, the new trick. Well, that’s the beauty of science.”

Learning from what happened last century, last year, and even last month. That is, indeed, the beauty of science. Continuous learning is the spirit that drives all progress, including SciMar’s groundbreaking type 2 diabetes research. And it’s the thread that is woven throughout SciMar’s Inside the Breakthrough podcast.

“Science is a process, not a destination. When I’m talking to undergrads, I often tell them about this revelation I had in grad school,” reflects Riskin, who holds a PhD in zoology from Cornell University. “I always had this idea that you learn until you know your craft, then you’re good. You just go apply your craft. But with science, you never finish learning. You’re constantly trying to learn your craft, and the craft just changes constantly. There’s never a finish line.”

Perhaps at no other time in recent history has science been in the spotlight the way it has been during COVID-19. With people talking about science every day and the speedy development of coronavirus vaccines, people are taking a new interest in the role science plays in our lives and that bodes well for the future, says Riskin.

“I mean, science wins, right? Pandemics happen; that’s just part of being an organism. But to have a vaccine within a year, that’s insane,” says Riskin. “Science stepped up in a way that is just so cool. With all the politics and celebrity TikTok videos, with all the things humanity’s wasting its time on, science showed up to the game and just crushed it. We’re hearing from scientists every day and seeing how the scientific process works, right before our eyes. Anybody who’s old enough to be paying attention can see scientists making mistakes and learning from them in real time, right?”

It’s Riskin’s enthusiasm for science and his passion for making it accessible to the masses through storytelling that drew him to SciMar’s Inside the Breakthrough. Riskin spins a couple of science yarns in each episode, taking a peek at processes, projects, and people who have changed the world. It’s plain language and plain fun, even if you’ve never cracked the spine of a science book.



Dan Riskin, host of SciMar’s Inside the Breakthrough: “I’m really impressed by how driven and focused Dr. Lautt is, and how he’s been able to build a whole community around his work.”

“The podcast is good fun and makes a beautiful connection between the past and the present,” says Riskin. “We have this idea that Galileo and Newton figured it out and we’re all just resting on our laurels. What happened in Galileo’s day and in Newton’s day is still happening today. The scientific process is the same. The experience of the scientist is often the same. And the beauty of it is the same. So the podcast isn’t just a call to appreciate the science heroes of the past, it’s a chance to look at science today. It’s all connected.”

For a current perspective, the podcast zeroes in on Dr. W. Wayne Lutt and his pioneering work on human metabolism, type 2 diabetes, and hepatic insulin-sensitizing substance (the HISS hormone), revealing a little more of Lutt’s 30-year research journey in each episode.

“I’m really impressed by how driven and focused Dr. Lutt is, and how he’s been able to build a whole community around his work,” says Riskin.

While drive and focus characterize Dr. Lutt’s work, the same can be said for Dan Riskin’s colourful career as a scientist and science communicator. It all started with a high school fascination with bats. He ultimately joined a lab at York University in Toronto and found himself studying these flying mammals first in Costa Rica and later in a dozen other countries, earning 20 publication credits along the way.

Along with obscure bat habits, he also discovered that he loved presenting his findings at conferences: “It sounds so boring, but giving a science talk in front of an audience was when I really felt like I was in my element.”

His command of the conference hall led to invitations to speak to non-science audiences, which led to media interviews, guest appearances on major talk shows, and eventually a hosting spot on Daily Planet, the Discovery Channel’s flagship program. Today, he’s a sought-after science commentator, he’s collaborating with his scientist wife on a project about how best to deliver conservation messages, and he’s working on three book projects, including a children’s book due out in 2022.

He’s drawn to exciting projects that celebrate and elevate science—projects like Inside the Breakthrough.

“I’ve really come to appreciate the craft of science communication,” he says. “And it’s really fun to work on this particular podcast because it’s been so fun to weave together these great stories and then tie them into the story of SciMar. Evolutionarily, we’re built to listen to interesting stories and I hope people engage with them.”

By: *Stu Slayen*

Dan Riskin, PhD, is a biologist, science journalist, and author. He is best known as the former host of Daily Planet on Discovery, and as the author of the bestselling book *Mother Nature is Trying to Kill You*. For several years, Dan worked as a bat scientist, travelling around the world to understand the biomechanics of bat movement. But in 2011 he left a tenure-track position to focus on communicating science to popular audiences. Dan frequently appears as a science specialist on TV news shows (CTV, BNN, CNN, CBS), and has been interviewed by Anderson Cooper, Craig Ferguson, Jay Leno, and Mehmet Oz. Dan has hosted science TV shows on the Discovery Channel, National Geographic, Animal Planet, CTV, and CBC. He lives in Toronto.

Follow Dan Riskin on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/riskindan>

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## VIGOUR AND RIGOUR

### INTRODUCING SNI, SCIMAR'S CLINICAL TRIALS PROVIDER

DECEMBER 15, 2021

As a young man growing up in Rimouski, Quebec, Bernie Desgagnés, his brothers, and their dad would pass the time throwing axes, chopping wood, and competing against their fellow lumberjacks across North America to see who could saw through massive logs the fastest.

Being a successful competitive lumberjack required laser-like focus, attention to detail, a commitment to safety, and an uncommon work ethic. The same goes for the skills required to run a company focused on regulatory affairs and clinical trials. Same vigour; even more rigour.

Today, the only logging Desgagnés does is data. As Founder, President, and CEO of Winnipeg-based Source Nutraceutical Inc. (SNI), he is a strategic supplier to SciMar as the company works to test, validate, and commercialize its product pipeline. In the clinical trials world, SNI is known as a “contract research organization”, or CRO.

SNI has already conducted a small clinical trial of SciMar NuPa Test, SciMar’s diagnostic test meal, to fine-tune the trial protocols and establish baseline measures. These are human trials that follow SciMar’s many years of lab work and animal trials. A clinical trial with 16 people will launch at the end of January 2022, followed by larger and more frequent clinical trials through SciMar’s Wellness Transformation Network community outreach initiative.

“As a CRO, it’s important for people to know that we have no financial interest in SciMar or any of our clients. The integrity of the process depends on that,” says Desgagnés. “Our role is to help our clients gather compliant data that demonstrate the safety, efficacy, and quality of their products. Only then will Health Canada license any natural health product, drug, or medical device for sale in Canada. The clinical trials process is vital, as it ensures that in the end, only safe and effective products reach the marketplace.”

Canada has developed a positive international reputation for the strictness of its rules and the high standards required for clinical trials. With rigorous trials that produce positive results, SNI’s clients can publish their findings with confidence and make authentic claims about what their products can do.

But the system wasn’t always so strict, and consumers weren’t always so well protected. Prior to 2004, the system was less regulated, the line between food and drug was blurred, and sometimes snake oil with dubious claims would find its way to market. In 2004, the government established new guidelines for natural health products and Desgagnés stepped in to fill a huge consulting void. “My goal then and now was to provide a turnkey service to Canadian innovators and to businesses from



Bernie Desgagnés wows the crowd. Being a competitive lumberjack and head of a contract research organization both demand “laser-like focus, attention to detail, a commitment to safety, and an uncommon work ethic.”

other countries looking to enter the Canadian market. We look at every part of the product lifecycle from concept, to testing, to quality assurance, to packaging, translation, and labelling,” says Desgagnés. “We help clients navigate the very complex regulatory landscape.”

Desgagnés found his way to the world of clinical trials, regulatory affairs, and natural health products through his own enthusiasm for health and fitness and his interest in standards.

He left Rimouski after high school and followed his brother to northern Manitoba. “My brother was working for Manitoba Forestry (Manfor) and I thought I would, too. There were also opportunities to work in the mines, but they were both on strike at the time,” he says. “Mostly, I came to Manitoba to learn English.”

At the same time, the 18-year-old decided to pump some iron—“in case I got into any fights,” he jokes—and eventually became a competitive bodybuilder (he still works out five days a week in his home gym). With no forestry or mine work available, Desgagnés took a job with the provincial government as a machine operator and then moved south to Brandon to get his Red Seal and his ticket to work as a heavy-duty diesel mechanic.

His work with the province continued, and he parlayed that into a job with Manitoba’s department of Workplace Safety and Health. It’s where he got his first taste of regulatory affairs and he was fascinated by it. In total, Desgagnés worked for the province for 18 years. Through much of that time, he had a side muscle hustle selling sports supplements to fellow fitness enthusiasts.

And then along came an opportunity to enter the private sector as Director of Regulatory Affairs for a natural health products company in Winnipeg. It was a chance to marry his interests in regulation and health products. Eight years later, the company decided to uproot and move its head office to Toronto. Desgagnés wasn’t interested in leaving Manitoba at the time, and the new Health Canada regulations for natural health products were just coming online. So, he decided to stay put, go on his own, and provide consulting services from home. His timing was right; his work ethic and passion were primed. That was 17 years ago and he hasn’t looked back, and with the recent opening of new clinic space that will house SciMar’s trials, SNI is poised for the next level.

“We’re excited for this work with SciMar, especially given the high incidence of type 2 diabetes in Manitoba,” says Desgagnés. “Their passion is undeniable and they are keenly focused on their goal of changing the course of human health by balancing metabolic function through nutrient partitioning and the hepatalin paradigm. We’re proud to help them navigate toward that goal.”

By: Stu Slayen



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## WORKING TOWARD A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON DIABETES

SCIMAR'S WELLNESS TRANSFORMATION NETWORK PARTNERS WITH DIABETES CANADA

JUNE 14, 2021

It wasn't long after the onset of the pandemic in early 2020 that it became clear that people with diabetes were particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

And so the already-extensive advocacy work of Diabetes Canada took on new dimensions. The national organization championed remote work, virtual care, and early vaccines for people living with diabetes.

For Kimberley Hanson, Executive Director of Diabetes Canada, the urgency to develop a robust national strategy on diabetes has become even more clear during the pandemic: "If we had a national strategy, people with diabetes and other chronic conditions would be less vulnerable."



Kimberley Hanson: "I think that we need the kind of research and clinical trials that SciMar is doing to help us better understand this disease."

A national strategy, says Hanson, would incorporate Indigenous wisdom and look at health policy, promoting and sharing novel research, promoting wellness, and other elements related to addressing the needs of people living with type 1 diabetes, prediabetes, and type 2 diabetes.

"The World Health Organization recommends that every country have a diabetes strategy," says Hanson, who has been with Diabetes Canada for four years. "They know that the ones that do have a strategy have a lower prevalence of the disease and lower costs of treating it. Canada is in the worst third of OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries in terms of both of those items."

Hanson is hopeful that Diabetes 360°—her organization's roadmap for a Canada-wide strategy—will accelerate the conversation and move the agenda forward. There have been some positive signs, as the federal government threw its support behind establishing a "national framework for diabetes" in the 2021 budget. An important step, especially in a COVID-focused year, but much work needs to be done and innovative community initiatives such as SciMar's Wellness Transformation Network have an important role to play.

The Wellness Transformation Network, scheduled to launch in the fall of 2021, will measure the effectiveness of a variety of lifestyle interventions through the lens of SciMar's novel science. Participant groups will come from non-profit organizations, businesses, and Indigenous communities.

"We've always designed Diabetes 360° to be implemented via public-private partnerships in the broadest sense, because a problem as large and complex as diabetes can't be solved by any one actor or one community on their own," says Hanson. "And so partners like SciMar and its Wellness Transformation Network are going to be critical in ways that we can imagine and in some ways that we can't even imagine yet. I think that we need the kind of research and clinical trials that SciMar is doing to help us better understand this disease. There's so much misunderstanding about diabetes, and that gets in the way of its prevention, its treatment, and healthy patient outcomes."

Hanson is also excited by the fact that what SciMar learns through the Wellness Transformation Network at the grassroots level can be shared and replicated.

“We need solutions to be developed, tested, and learned from at the community level. The kind of work that the Wellness Transformation Network is enabling is going to be key in the communities where it’s working, but also in others that can borrow from the great experiences that communities will have as part of the network and then apply them in their own way,” she says. “There is a synergy here between Diabetes Canada and the Wellness Transformation Network in their approach to co-creating solutions with communities. I think that one of the core principles of Diabetes 360° is that it’s a common framework that’s meant to be applied in a customized way in each community, province, or region. It’s meant to be adapted and adaptable.”

For Hanson, the keys to the success of a national strategy include reducing stigma, increasing awareness, and deeply understanding diabetes in all its forms.

“If I could wave a magic wand, it would be to help everybody have a more accurate understanding of what the disease is, and what its risk factors are and aren’t. I think that would go a long way to helping people feel empowered to take charge of their health and to do what they can about the factors they can control, so that the burden on people’s lives and the health care system would be reduced,” says Hanson. “This is consistent with the principles of the Wellness Transformation Network and its approach to finding health solutions and creating them with communities.”

By: Stu Slayen



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