

# WE ARE ORKIDSTRA

## SET THE STAGE... FOR LIFE

Help us set the stage for kids to find music,  
resilience and belonging



Over many years, Tina Fedeski enjoyed a successful career as a flautist in several orchestras around the world and a bustling business with her husband and fellow musician Gary McMillen. But they both had a passion to make music – the pursuit of which is often prohibitively expensive – more accessible to all young people.

They just didn't know how.

In January 2007, they watched a movie about José Antonio Abreu, who used music to empower and unite children living in poverty in Venezuela. "Let us teach our children the beauty of music and music will teach them the beauty of life," Abreu said.

Tina and Gary were captivated. Over 40 years, Abreu built a program that teaches music and offers a sense of belonging to hundreds of thousands of children from difficult places. What if, they thought, they could start something similar in Ottawa?

Together with friend and cellist Margaret Maria Tobolowska, they did exactly that.

## They called it OrKidstra.



(L to R) Tina Fedeski, Gary McMillen, and Margaret Maria Tobolowska



**EXCELLENCE** "We are not trying to create virtuoso musicians but to nurture virtuoso human beings." —Tina Fedeski, MSM, OrKidstra Co-Founder

PHOTO BY GREG ALLISON

## Instrument of transformative change



PHOTO BY ORKIDSTRA

Passionate support from donors and volunteers has established OrKidstra as a powerful instrument of transformation in the lives of thousands of children in low-income neighbourhoods of Ottawa.

Since our founding as a charity in 2007, OrKidstra has provided **over 3,500 kids with free music lessons and a home away from home**, cultivating a sense of belonging and teaching life skills necessary for kids to be confident, responsible, and resourceful adults.

But there are so many more in Ottawa who face inequity, lack of access, or are alone at home during the critical after-school hours\* when parents are working, with little access to programs that keep them engaged and safe while boosting development.

### Help us reach them all.

In the following pages, you'll see how.



**MISSION** To empower kids and build community through the universal language of music by providing free group and individual music lessons to children from families facing systemic financial, cultural, social, and linguistic barriers.



**VISION** A future where all children and youth have the opportunity to find their voice and build their potential through music.



**VALUES** Love. Courage. Excellence. Belonging.

\*According to the Harvard Family Research Project, the hours from 3 to 6 PM are associated with peak times for juvenile crime and juvenile victimization and represent the greatest potential hazards to a young person's development.



## OrKidstra makes an immediate and lifelong impact

**Music has the power to change lives.** As a free social development through music program for kids in low-income neighbourhoods, OrKidstra sparks joy and creativity, but more importantly, also addresses social, cultural, and financial obstacles. OrKidstra helps kids grow into flourishing, confident adults.

The OrKidstra program serves priority neighbourhoods across the city of Ottawa and has helped transform the lives and communities of **over 3,500 kids** over the last 15 years.

### Let's start at the very beginning.

Offered both in-school and after-school, our KiddlyWinks program engages kids as young as five in music and movement. **Starting at age eight, children are welcomed at our local community after-school Hubs at no cost, with no auditions.** Students commit to playing in a musical ensemble and/or singing in a choir. As their Kid-Powered commitment grows, youth can take hold of exciting opportunities like community outreach, leadership training, and much more. They experience the delight of music and the power of belonging, all while developing lasting skills such as teamwork, grit, and self-discipline.

With the guidance of professional Teaching Artists, a team of volunteers, and our dedicated staff, **each week OrKidstra serves hundreds of kids aged 5-18 from over 62 cultural and linguistic backgrounds**, many during the critical after-school hours when parents are at work.

Because kids can join from the age of five, attend programs between two and four days a week, and stay until the end of high school, OrKidstra becomes a deeply positive influence in a child's life, impacting them both immediately, and supporting them into their future. Since 2007, OrKidstra has offered **tens of thousands of programming hours** to children and youth.

PHOTOS BY ORKIDSTRA AND GREG ALLISON

## OrKidstra programs



**BELONGING** Hadi Krayem came to Canada in 2013, part of the 6.7 million Syrian diaspora. In 2016, his parents enrolled him and his sister in OrKidstra. "My parents were trying to integrate into Canadian society. It was hard, but OrKidstra created a sense of community, and despite all our cultural differences, we never felt like outcasts," he says. "It created a comforting rhythm and routine."

Hadi has been part of the OrKidstra family for over six years and plays the violin. Far beyond learning to play a musical instrument, he credits OrKidstra with teaching him how to succeed in Canada. "OrKidstra developed my social skills. It taught me how to break down all the problems I am facing step by step and to help others - everything you need to be in Canada."



PHOTO BY GREG ALLISON

# Building community one Hub at a time



**5**

Average number of years a child stays in the OrKidstra program



**\$500,000**

Cost to run one Hub at full capacity with free instruments and lessons per year\*

**3,552** Free group and private instruction hours given per year

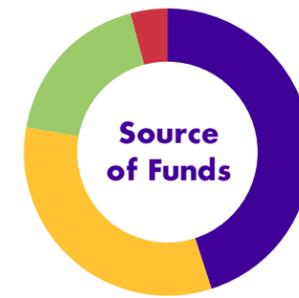
**650** In-school students

**250** After-school students

**230** Free summer camp instruction hours given per year

**62** Cultural and linguistic backgrounds represented

**30** Teaching Artists and Mentors



Individuals **45%**  
Foundations **33%**  
Government Grants **18%**  
Corporations **4%**



Program **79%**  
Administration/Management **13%**  
Development **8%**

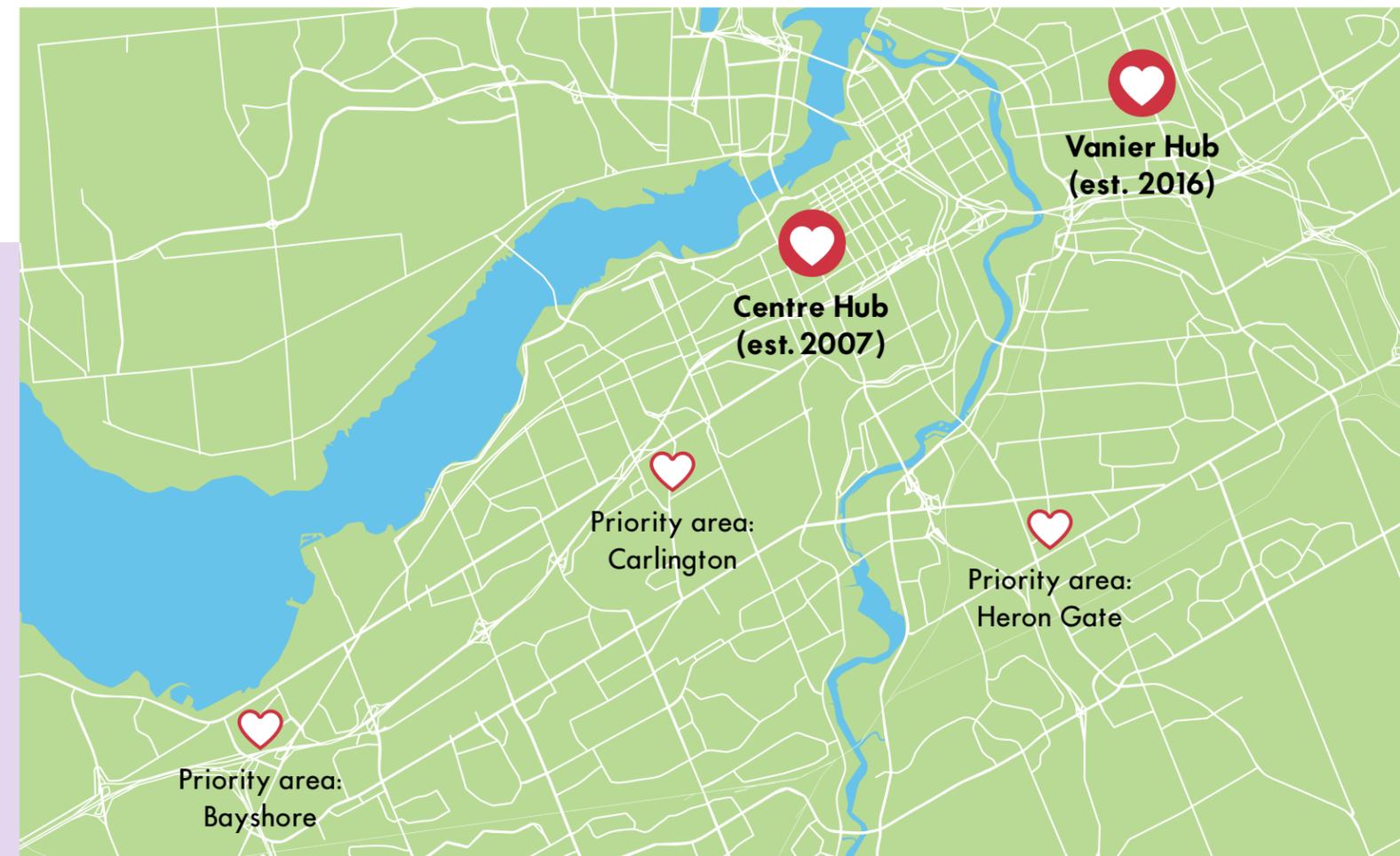


Professional Teaching Services **45%**  
Program Staff & Volunteer Coordination **37%**  
Instruments, Program Supplies & Rent **15%**  
Community Outreach **3%**



**EXCELLENCE** Rinila joined the OrKidstra choir when she was 7 years old, the same year she immigrated from Mumbai. "I just wanted to make friends," she explains, and OrKidstra operated out of a Hub directly near her apartment. "I couldn't have gone if the Hub wasn't so close." She went after school when her mother was working. "It taught me core skills like leadership, discipline, and time management, but socially, a lot of my closest friends are still from OrKidstra. They are my second family."

Today, Rinila is 22 and studying Biomedical Science at the University of Ottawa. "The arts help a child develop in so many other aspects of life. The gift of music is a win-win. I wouldn't be the person I am today without OrKidstra."



Each year OrKidstra - Sistema Ottawa is independently audited by a licensed public accounting firm which produces a publicly available Audited Financial Statement (AFS). These figures are based on the 2021-22 AFS.

\*Total expenses in 2021-22 were \$833,400

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNITED WAY EAST ONTARIO

# The benefits of learning music

**Improves** physical skills such as listening, dexterity, and coordination

**Improves** cognitive skills such as numeracy, literacy, and pattern recognition

**Builds** life skills such as responsibility, respect, and critical thinking

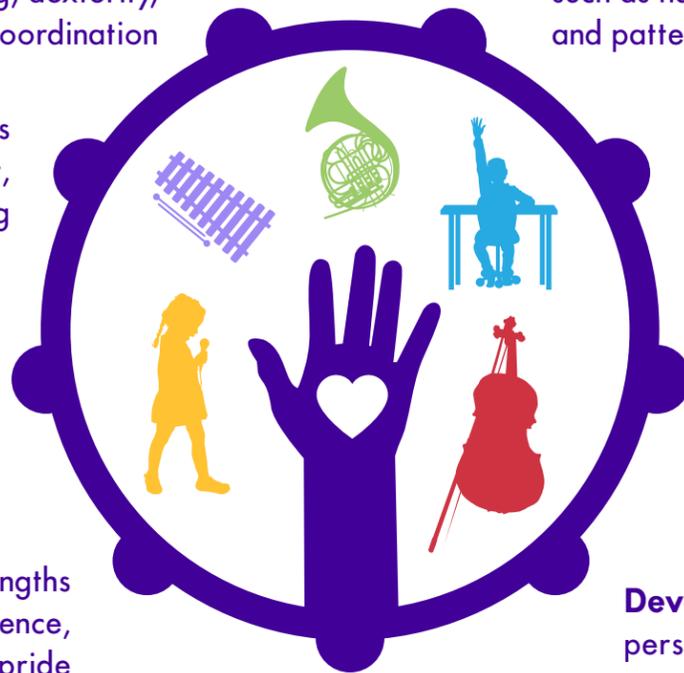
**Enhances** social skills such as teamwork, empathy, and communication

**Enhances** positive behaviours like patience and focus

**Cultivates** problem-solving when faced with difficult tasks

**Builds** emotional strengths such as self-confidence, resilience, and pride in achievement

**Develops** passion and perseverance to achieve meaningful goals



**Creates** a sense of belonging, community, and develops friendships



## OrKidstra Donors have a front-row seat

PHOTO BY GREG ALLISON

**OrKidstra donors are unique – and are so much more than financial contributors. They are both fans and family. They literally get a front-row seat to watch as the power of music helps transform lives. OrKidstra is harmony in action.**

Our donors personally witness their philanthropic investment at work through our **joyful concerts** and **receive exclusive invitations** to special performances.

OrKidstra kids have performed at the **Juno Awards**, on Parliament Hill as part of the Canada Day 150 celebrations, and at the Opening Ceremonies for the Global Centre for Pluralism, to name a few.

They have performed under internationally renowned guest conductors such as **Alexander Shelley**, Music Director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra and OrKidstra Ambassador, and with big names in music such as pop superstar **Alessia Cara** and internationally acclaimed pianist and OrKidstra Ambassador **Angela Hewitt**.

When you see them perform, you will become their biggest fans. In return, **OrKidstra welcomes you with open arms into the family.**

**LOVE** *“I see myself in every one of these children as a new Canadian who has been given a chance. When you come to (a new country), you don’t want to be a burden but a productive contributor. OrKidstra has given me that chance to be useful by giving back.”*

—Salim Charabati, Board Member, OrKidstra



PHOTO BY CAMP ORKIDSTRA

## The need at Ottawa's door

### In the neighbourhoods we serve\*:

**55%** of kids aged 0-14 live in low-income households

**29%** live in subsidized housing

**29%** are single-parent households

**32%** are living in unaffordable housing  
(i.e., cost of housing >30% of income)

**32%** are first-generation immigrants

**11%** are refugees

Youth in under-served communities are more likely to drop out of school, which continues the cycle of poverty: OrKidstra's after-school Hubs are strategically placed in high-needs areas of Ottawa. The links between school success and healthy participation in high-quality activities Out-of-School Time – like OrKidstra – are clear (United Way).



PHOTO BY GREG ALLISON

**COURAGE Music as Medicine** Dr. Sue Bennett, a CHEO pediatrician, Professor at the University of Ottawa, and Medical Director at the Vanier Social Pediatric Hub has started a pilot project giving “social prescriptions” to kids and their families who are living in an underserved community. OrKidstra is one of her favourites.

*“I get so many referrals for isolated children and youth who are struggling in many aspects of their lives which have been exacerbated by the Covid restrictions. Participation in OrKidstra meets the emotional, psychological, and social needs of kids living in challenged families and is self esteem building and gives them a sense of belonging and meaning AND it's fun!” she says. It also addresses social and health inequities with many low-income families being unable to access artistic and cultural activities.*

*It's not just the kids who say they feel happier after they join the OrKidstra program. Their parents and teachers notice a shift in behaviour. “Parents say their kids are kinder. They are more self-regulated. And they stay in school,” says Dr. Bennett. “The Minister for Education needs to know the dropout rate is much less for kids invested in music!”*

## OrKidstra addresses systemic community needs

**Propelled by the vision of music as an instrument of social transformation, OrKidstra has partnered with families, schools, governments, foundations, and organizations to reach kids at risk of failing to flourish.**

Our work:

### Removes Barriers

OrKidstra capitalizes on the strength and beauty of the diversity that is Canada. With kids from over **62 linguistic and cultural backgrounds**, OrKidstra removes barriers of finances, language, and inequity and prioritizes teamwork through the universal language of music.

### Facilitates Development

Music has the power to enhance the cognitive and emotional development of children\*. Learning an instrument teaches hard skills of perseverance, self-discipline and problem-solving. Doctors linked to the Vanier Community Services Centre in Ottawa currently **“prescribe” OrKidstra to children and their families** as a remedy for poor concentration, isolation, and anxiety.

- OrKidstra is proud to say that **100% of OrKidstra Graduates have completed high school** and gone on to post-secondary education.
- **88% of students** say that the OrKidstra experience has helped **improve their concentration.**
- **93%** of OrKidstra parents say their child is **doing better in school.**

### Cultivates Friendships

As they join a choir, play in an ensemble, or connect in the “green” room, kids in OrKidstra find purpose, joy in creativity, the warmth of friendship, and **hope for their future.**



PHOTOS BY GREG ALLISON AND ORKIDSTRA

\*Overbrook as an indicative example. Figures from the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study based at the Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services (CRECS) at the University of Ottawa.

\*“Music boosts brain and cognitive function which is important for learning. In turn, these heightened skills facilitate success in school.” American Scientist; “The Argument for Music Education”; Nina Kraus, Ph.D., and Travis White-Schwoch



## A proven program with significant social returns

**A single desire unites our donors, volunteers, partners, staff, and teachers: to help kids develop the skills they need to thrive!**

**You don't have to love music to love OrKidstra!**

Here, all kids can learn to sing in a choir and play an instrument – such as the violin, trombone, or flute – with no cost and no auditions required. Music is an instrument for social development. As the kids **learn to play together, it weaves together a family**, each member learning to work in harmony as a community.

When we gather at our concerts, shared delight, pride of accomplishment, courage in performance, and excellence are centre stage. You don't have to love music to love OrKidstra!

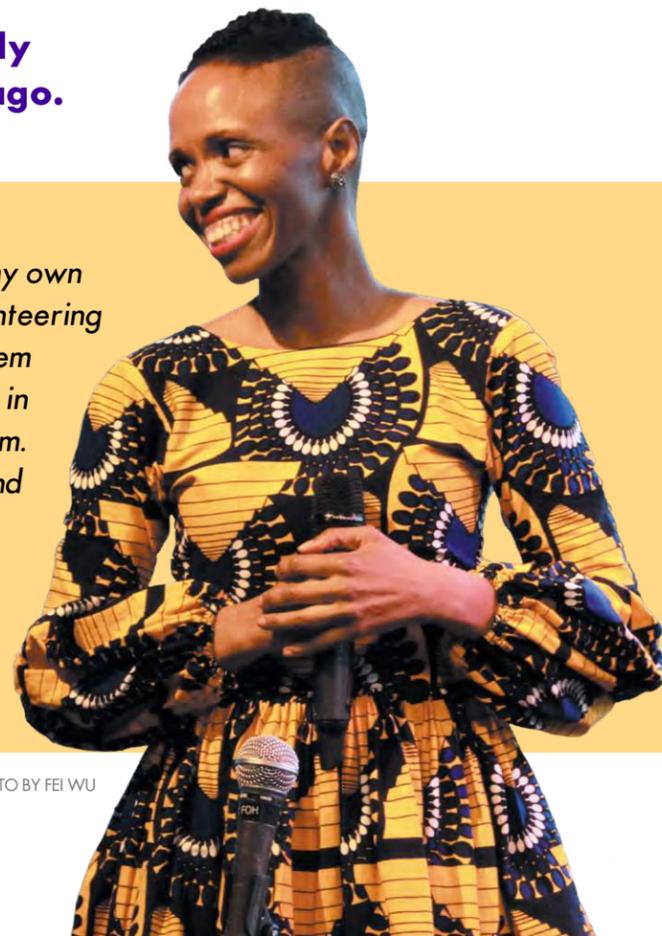
Kids nurtured by OrKidstra programs share the social benefits with their families and communities through concerts, but also through their **increased confidence, sense of security and belonging, and all the vital skills and cognitive values** associated with learning to play a musical instrument.

**Our OrKidstra programs have positively impacted over 3,500 kids and their family members since we began over 15 years ago.**

**COURAGE** *"I saw the changes that happened in my own children. I watched them take on mentorship roles, volunteering in OrKidstra and outside in the community. I watched them interact with donors, with audiences as they performed in lobbies, on stages and outdoors. I watched them blossom. People want to give their kids the best opportunities, and OrKidstra helps kids have opportunities regardless of their socio-economic background."*

— Kellylee Evans, Juno Award Winning singer-songwriter, OrKidstra parent and Ambassador

PHOTO BY FEI WU



## Creative innovation in challenging times

**OrKidstra brings music education home with virtual learning**



In 2020, when schools were suddenly shut down and kids were isolated at home, OrKidstra "modulated" quickly, providing live online programming, and coordinating virtual concerts.

While it will take some time to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic fully, we are confident our innovative programming, strong infrastructure, passionate Teaching Artists, and enthusiastic supporters will fuel rapid growth.

**We want to create a future where all children and youth can reach for success through music.**

**BELONGING** *"For kids on the fringe, looking for belonging and community, looking for their people, music is a way to connect. It nourishes externally, but it also nourishes internally. With the pandemic and the global political situation, I've never felt it more sincerely, that music is a need. At dark times you need good things to lift you up."*

—Karen Donnelly, Principal Trumpet, NAC Orchestra and OrKidstra donor

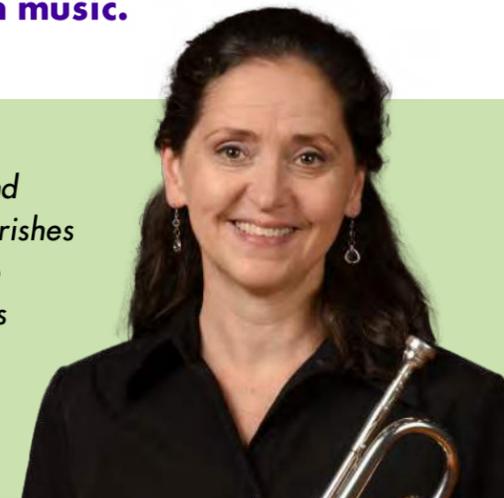


PHOTO BY FANGLIANG XU



PHOTO BY GREG ALLISON

# Help OrKidstra **SET THE STAGE** for life

**Imagine:** you enter the concert hall.

You can almost see sparks bouncing from children gripping an instrument on stage, nervous, excited, bursting with anticipation. **Their eyes light up as they spot their parents, grandparents, neighbours, friends, and teachers** taking their seats.

The conductor walks dramatically across the stage. There's an expectant hush. With a sweeping glance, she invites all the children to focus on her. She smiles, lifts her hands, and suddenly, **music fills the eyes, ears, and hearts of everyone in the hall.**

## **The music.**

Without words, it communicates every longing, every hope, and every dream. Every language is transposed into one. **For tonight, there is only one voice, one experience, one celebration.**

# Join us!

OrKidstra's goal is to grow our program from 2 Hubs to 3 over the next five years to make **The Stage** available to more and more kids in Ottawa.

**We are seeking a committed team of donors to ensure The Stage is continuously equipped, and our doors are open to all kids who want to belong.**

When you join our **Set The Stage** community of donors, you become the backbone for fulfilling the vision and helping us grow with...

- ⊕ more neighbourhoods
- ⊕ more spaces
- ⊕ more access
- ⊕ more instruments
- ⊕ more programs
- ⊕ more teachers
- ⊕ more music
- ⊕ in fact, more of *everything* kids need to flourish.

We invite you to invest in building an OrKidstra, an Ottawa and a Canada where every child belongs and is empowered to uncover the inner beauty and potential in their own life.



PHOTO BY GREG ALLISON

**LOVE** *"You have changed my life. You've changed the life of every single kid that walks in through those doors. You're family, you know? And you just support us and we love you for that. So thank you."*

—Serena, OrKidstra graduate, violin, and Architecture student, Toronto Metropolitan University



OrKidstra – Sistema Ottawa  
211 Bronson Avenue  
Studios 204 & 210  
Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6H5  
**613.233.0166**

[development@orkidstra.ca](mailto:development@orkidstra.ca)

[orkidstra.ca](http://orkidstra.ca)

Charitable Org. # 83246 7153 RR0001

Special thanks to the City of Ottawa, Greg Allison, DO Philanthropy Inc., and Aerographics Creative Services for their contributions to this document.



PHOTO BY  
GREG ALLISON