



Roots of Change Foundation  
Source de développement  
Bringing hope to people in need  
[www.rootsofchange.ca](http://www.rootsofchange.ca)

## Christmas 2024 Newsletter



Dear donor,

If you are like me, at the end of this year 2024, you are tired of hearing all the bad news that is broadcast daily. It seems to me that all year there was disaster upon disaster and wars raging all over the globe with each one becoming more murderous than the other. People expressing their bitterness about the situation they live in and blaming governments and individuals for their plight. Politicians continually at each other's throats vying for power. All and all it is really depressing.

What I want for Christmas is a news channel that operates 24/7 highlighting only good deeds and heroic examples of caring for each other. I am sure that there would not be a lack of good stories or listeners. In fact, I believe that what we are doing at Roots of Change and FUNDACCO would easily cover 1 hour per week of solid positive testimonies of who our donors are and what their donations are doing to awaken and sustain hope amongst our brethren the poor in Nicaragua. Would it not be wonderful to turn on the television to this Doing Good News channel after a hard day at work and be nourished by wonderful stories of ordinary men and women who together are changing the world. How inspirational this would be. God is not dead. He lives in each and every act of mercy and kindness, and there are millions every day. The only problem is that these acts of kindness are by and large not deemed newsworthy.

I just want you all to know that through your generosity I am reminded daily that God is at work and cares deeply for His beloved poor. Through the many successful projects that FUNDACCO completes and the hope that is born in the hearts of many, I am reminded that God cares and still multiplies our offerings to feed the multitudes not just with food but with hope. Our donations are truly being multiplied. The results in Nicaragua are the proof.

I stand in gratitude of your great generosity and am humbled that again this year we can meet our commitment to FUNDACCO. This is the best Christmas gift of all for me and to those to whom we bring hope in Nicaragua.

I speak for all board members when I say God Bless You for giving us this precious gift. Indeed, rejoice, because you are stockpiling treasures in heaven and will have the gift of being ushered into paradise by many of the poor that your generosity has helped out of hopelessness.

Please continue in the New Year to bless us all with your generosity as we start our 20th year of operation at Roots of Change. And maybe, just maybe, I will get my wish to have a half-hour news cast on what we accomplish and the love that motivates us to help the poor.

Joyeux Noël, Merry Christmas, Feliz Navidad, Bonne et heureuse année, Happy New Year, y Feliz Año Nuevo.

God Bless

David Fréchette Président

## Why Missions? Why Nicaragua?

by Fr. Curtis Berube



In the Spring of 2018, I had the opportunity to travel with a group on a 9-day Mission's Trip to the community of Villa del Campo, Mexico. Our project was to demolish and construct a new roof for a catechesis school on the property of a parish, and to work on building a new rectory for the parish priest. At the time of this trip, I was in my final couple years of seminary formation before being ordained to the priesthood in 2020.

This was the first time I had been on a mission trip like this. And as I reflect back on it, I can recall many fond memories from these days. We went there for a purpose, and helped with a present need. We worked alongside local residents of the community. We met the pastor of the parish and many of his parishioners. But more than this, our eyes and our hearts were opened to the gratitude, the simplicity, and above all the generosity of the people we encountered.

In February of 2025, I will be leading a mission group to the community of El Zapote in Nicaragua. As I have not yet been there myself, I cannot imagine all that I can expect. But I have witnessed that those who have gone and have shared their experiences with me, have been deeply moved by what they have seen and done there and by the people they have met.

I pray that our trip is fruitful – that we can share generously with those we will meet, and have receptive hearts to receive from them as well. And as we return afterwards to our lives in Canada, I pray that our hearts become even more open to the needs of those around us.



**Fr. Curtis Berube**

(image courtesy of the Edmonton Archdiocese)

## Canada Post Strike

For the duration of the postal strike, please consider using one of the following options to make your donation:

**Online through our website**

[www.rootsofchange.ca](http://www.rootsofchange.ca)

**eTransfer to [donations@rootsofchange.ca](mailto:donations@rootsofchange.ca)**

**The CanadaHelps.ca website**

**The Paypal Giving Fund**

**(search Paypal Giving Fund Canada)**

## Christmas in Nicaragua by Luis Cruz

For Nicaraguans, the Christmas spirit arrives with the popular celebration of 'La Purisima' (The feast of the Immaculate Conception), a religious observance that is celebrated on December 7th, beginning with the cry "Who Causes So Much Joy", and with the response "the Conception of Mary".

This celebration is important and special in the hearts of Nicaraguans. Families share songs to the Virgin Mary, sweets, toys, food, and the Love for Mary as the Mother of our heavenly Father.

Children and adults begin to decorate their homes with nativity scenes of the baby Jesus, Christmas lights and Christmas trees. Little by little they prepare to live a joyful December 24th and 25th where they participate in religious celebrations and family gatherings which share gifts, food and dance while thanking God for each of the blessings received during the year.

The children are very happy and hope to receive a toy or a new outfit from their parents, which they wear on Christmas Day for the special family gathering to celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus. To do this, they organize a dinner at midnight, a time when many people also set off fireworks in a show of joy.

On December 24 and 25, as a sign of gratitude for the blessings received from God, some families offer toys and food to the children who work at the traffic lights throughout the year, receiving smiles and joy from the children who benefit.

As FUNDACCO, we are unable to carry out Christmas activities with the children in the neighborhood where we have our offices. However, in January of each year, we work on recreational activities with the children in what we call the summer program, supporting the children with a school package for the start of class.

We are very grateful to all the people who work to keep FUNDACCO projects alive with the spirit of love and service as Father Denis did.

Merry Christmas to all

## Projects Update - Your Donations at work in Nicaragua

As the 2024-year winds down, the list of new projects continues to grow in number, thanks to our donors. Some will complete before year end; others will finish early in 2025. More projects will begin as the visiting delegations to Nicaragua arrive in 2025.

### Projects include:

- Improving living conditions with 20 latrines for 20 families in the La Carreta Community, Somotillo (\$12,842 - USD fully funded)
- Repairs to roof and supports for the Sanchez home in the community of Cinco Pinos (\$3,272 USD - fully funded)
- Los Limones and La Danta communities – 23 Improved Kitchens (Eco-Stoves) (fully funded by Saint Vincent de Paul's Twinning Program)
- Improvement of living conditions for 11 families in the El Zapote Community, Villa Nueva (delegation funded project)
- Improvement of the Drinking Water Distribution system for the La Honda Community (single donor funded)
- Installing latrines and water purifying filters, San Benito (donor funded)
- Backpack Project 2025 (funding required)
- In the early new year, FUNDACCO sponsors the F311401 Youth and Children Education and Development Program during the January school break. Funding is needed for the program activities and the school supplies distributed at program end that allow families to send children back to school for 2025. (Budget \$10,320 USD)

FUNDACCO will be submitting proposals for other community projects in first and second quarter of 2025. If you would like to donate to a particular type of project, please contact the Roots of Change at [info@rootsofchange.ca](mailto:info@rootsofchange.ca).

## Scholarship Update

Thanks to generous supporters of our scholarship program, funding is in place for 12 students during the 2025 academic year although funding is still needed to support the students in 2026.

Donations for the 2026 academic year can be made through our website at [www.rootsofchange.ca](http://www.rootsofchange.ca) or by mail until Sept 30, 2025. Please be sure to mark your donation 'Scholarship Fund for Higher Education'.

A great big thank you to those who made our fundraising a success this year.

John Schile (Coordinator of Fund for Higher Education)

## Living the Legacy Part 5 Rick LeBlanc



My first encounter with Father Denis was as a child at a family reunion in St. Albert at the age of around 10. "Who was this celebrity priest?" I thought to myself at the time as he was the center of attention and everyone wanted to speak with him.

As it turned out, Father Denis was about to embark on his first trip abroad to work as a missionary in Lima Peru and the reunion was a sendoff celebration.

Although having heard about his work with the poor in the years that followed, it wasn't until some 40 years later that he would come into my life once again. It was through a St. Albert High School missionary trip to Nicaragua by my daughter that would eventually lead to the formation of the Roots of Change.

On one of Father's yearly visits to Canada following the high school mission, my daughter invited him and some of his friends to supper one evening. Following the meal, Father reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a neatly folded piece of paper which detailed a plan to start a foundation in support of his work in Nicaragua. It so happens that this evening would become the start of the Roots of Change and those in attendance would become its board of directors with me leading the initiative.

Now, a bit about myself. Born in St. Albert in 1952, I've lived here all my life; growing up on an acreage which then was on the outskirts of St. Albert but today is property occupied by the Village Tree Mall. My wife Rita and I married in 1980 and we have two children, Michael and Charla.

Following high school, I became an electrician and after receiving a master's certificate in 1979, started an electrical contracting business. In 1983, I was invited to teach at the Westerra Institute of Technology where one of my responsibilities was introducing electricians to Programmable Logic Controllers.

Having had the opportunity to be on the ground floor of the computer age, in 1994 I was fortunate to become part of a new company called Cybertech Automation. We were very successful in the years that followed and I retired in 2010 to pursue my lifelong hobby of woodworking.

Following receipt of provincial status as a charitable society in 2005, the offices of Cybertech in west Edmonton became the foundation's home base with telephone calls directed to my desk. Another connection between the foundation and Cybertech was Ray LeBlanc, a partner in the company, and a nephew of Father Denis.

In the years that followed, Ray and I funded the costly exercise of obtaining federal status as a registered charity and in 2009 we were granted a license to send funding outside the country to our sister organization FUNDACCO which was formed in 2007.

Although stepping aside from the day-to-day operation of the foundation in 2015, I continued to work in the background building on the business end of the organization, implementing practices to meet the high demands mandated by the federal government and that are in use today.

In 2018, I became president of the foundation for a second term and continued in this role until 2021 when I resigned from the board. Today, although not a member of the board, I continue to help out by assembling the newsletter and act as the IT person for the foundation.

## Backpacks of Hope – Empowering Nicaraguan Youth

In early 2025, the Roots of Change Foundation is excited to bring **Backpacks of Hope – Empowering Nicaraguan Youth** to the Fe y Alegria school in Los Coco, Nicaragua.

Seventy-five students, including 20 in preschool and 55 in grades 1 to 6, will receive essential school supplies that make learning easier.

Powered by fundraisers from Edmonton Catholic schools and benefit concerts by École La Mission in St. Albert and École Claudette et Denis Tardif in Sherwood Park, this project will make a real difference in the lives of the students who will benefit.

If you would like to support this mission, visit our website to make a donation and join us in empowering youth in Nicaragua.



## New Board Member Announcements

The Roots of Change Foundation is pleased to announce the appointment of 2 new members to its board of directors: Carolina Correia and Phil Schmidt.

Carolina is originally from a city called Fortaleza in the northeast region of Brazil. She arrived in Edmonton in the Fall of 2005 to join her husband who was participating in the World's Master Games during the Summer of that year.



Carolina Correia

Since her arrival, Carolina and her husband have raised a family of three boys, Jordan, Logan and Johan, ages 14, 11 and 6.

Carolina is a Civil Engineer with the Municipal Government and in the Consulting Industry. She is an avid gardener who has developed her own personal 'Urban Jungle', as she puts it, with favorite tropical plants and she loves caring for them.

Volunteering is something she always wanted to do and was looking for the right fit when she was put in contact with Jocelyne Durocher, a long-time board member who introduced her in the role of Donations Administrator.

We are happy to have Carolina as part of our team and she will assume the important role previously held by Jocelyne.

Phil, his wife Marie and their four children moved to St. Albert in 1996. He is an active member of Holy Family Parish, a volunteer with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and with the Youville Home. Phil is also a member of the Knights of Columbus (Brother Anthony Council) and is the current chair of the Star of the North Retreat House.

With over 35 years in the corporate business world, Phil brings with him years of experience including leading major change initiatives, managing multi-function business units, working on various steering committees and leading large teams in delivering excellent customer service.

Phil will be a great asset to the Foundation sharing in his vision of bringing hope to the poor of Nicaragua.



Phil Schmidt

## Investing in the Future

The vision of founder Father Denis Hébert



Father Denis Hébert

Father Denis Hébert, a missionary with the skills of a successful business man. People who knew him well would agree with this statement as it was a virtue that he applied to his missionary work. More importantly, when he had the opportunity, it was a skill that he passed on to the Nicaraguan people with whom he worked.

Planning ahead and making investments was a concept that formed a large part of Father's work as a missionary. It stemmed from his many years working with people in Central and South America and understanding the challenges they face trying to better their lives.

Father understood that most people, if given the opportunity and the means, want to better themselves.

Presented with daily challenges of providing food for their families, collecting firewood for their next meal or simply obtaining clean fresh water, the struggles associated with poverty leave little time to plan for the future or even think about it.

"It is development that will guarantee a peoples' transition from less than human conditions to truly human ones." (Pope Paul VI)"

Father Denis believed that in order to enable change, his mission would be to 'help people to

help themselves'. Not only did his work focus on the immediate needs of the people, but a large part was educating them on the benefits of investing in the future.

While the concept was sometimes difficult to understand or be appreciated by the people, it was only through working with community members and gaining their trust that they would come to understand the advantages of planning for the future.

His legacy and this approach continue today through Roots of Change Endowment Funds. They are a thoughtful and selfless investment that can offer dignity, support and hope to the Nicaraguan people for generations to come - all while receiving the tax benefits of a charitable donation.

Endowments help us secure long-term financial stability for the Nicaraguan people. The principal investment grows year after year and a small portion of the income generated provides our organization with funding for use towards our programs.

To help one better understand the benefit of an endowment, the following data is derived from the **John and Pauline Koroluk Memorial Fund**, one of 8 endowment funds supporting our work. A donation of \$10,000 was made in 2012 to create the fund with an additional \$9,026

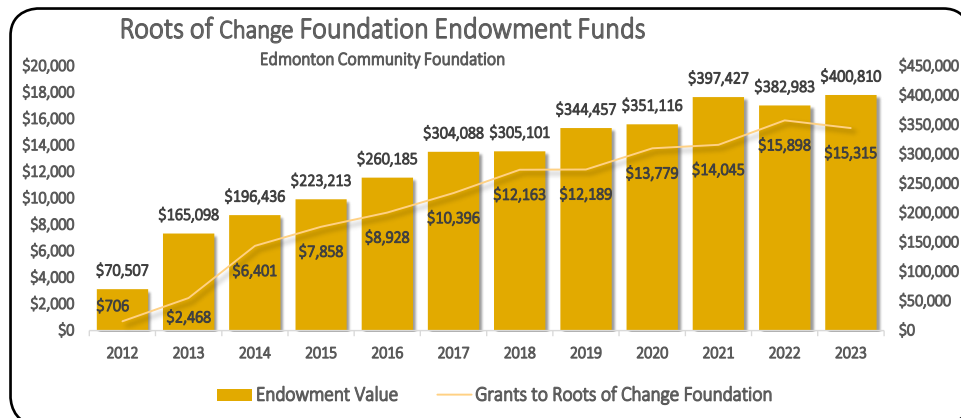
in donations added to it since then for a total of \$19,026. As of 2023, the Roots of Change has received \$10,624 in grants from the fund plus the value of the fund has grown by \$7,717 and today is \$26,743.

All of our endowments are mandated to support the Nicaraguan people regardless of whether the Roots of Change exists or not. This was the wish of Father Denis and is written in the contract with the Edmonton Community Foundation who administers the funds.

If you believe in the mission of Father Denis and its future, we encourage you to consider investing your donated dollar where it will generate funding year after year indefinitely and your donation will grow in perpetuity.

This Christmas season, please consider making a donation towards one of our endowment funds or should you have the means, create a legacy of support in someone's name by establishing your own fund with proceeds directed to the Roots of Change.

For more information on how you can contribute or create a fund, please contact the Edmonton Community Foundation at [info@ecf.ca](mailto:info@ecf.ca) or call 780.426.0015. Alternatively, please contact the Roots of Change directly at [info@rootsofchange.ca](mailto:info@rootsofchange.ca).



For more information [www.rootsofchange.ca](http://www.rootsofchange.ca)

Please help by supporting this ministry of hope

### 2023-24 Board of Directors

#### Officers:

President - David Fréchette  
Vice President - Rod Valdes  
Secretary - Lucille Damer  
Treasurer - Mel Kammerer  
Project Administrator - Ken Handford  
Donations - Carolina Correia

#### Directors:

John Schile - Scholarships  
Angy Spiller - Delegations  
Danielle Nobert-Halvorsen  
Phil Schmidt  
Lloyd Arcand  
Charla LeBlanc

Would you like to get involved or have a talent to share?

We are always looking for people who would like to help us in our **Mission of Hope** for the Nicaraguan people.

If interested, contact us at [info@rootsofchange.ca](mailto:info@rootsofchange.ca) to learn more about how to get involved.

The goal for our 2024 campaign is \$140,000.

The estimated cost of printing and mailing 3 publications per year is \$2,400.

For information contact Jocelyne Durocher at 780.405.8084

### PayPal Giving Fund

PayPal Giving Fund Canada provides a method to make a credit card donation that eliminates the fees the Foundation would normally be charged which is between 2- 3% of the donation - and every penny counts!

Search for "PayPal Giving Fund" in your browser, click on 'Donate Here' then search for Roots of Change Foundation.

PayPal Giving Fund Canada will provide a Charitable Donation Receipt for your donation and we will be notified once it is processed.

Donations are now accepted through eTransfer to [donations@rootsofchange.ca](mailto:donations@rootsofchange.ca)

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