



A Family Making a Difference

Kai Matthews was a kind, determined and healthy 19-year-old with tremendous potential.

On June 1, 2021, in less than 30 hours, meningitis B (MenB) claimed his life.

While MenB is the most common and deadliest strain of meningitis, many of those most at risk haven't been immunized against the B strain. This includes children younger than five, who are at the highest risk, followed by people ages 15-19 and 60 and older.

In honour of Kai, his family established the IWK BforKai Trust in 2022 to help fund MenB education, training, research and awareness.

The IWK BforKai Trust has supported the creation of a MenB module for the national Translating Emergency Knowledge for Kids (TREKK) program. TREKK provides training and resources to enhance the quality of care for children in emergency departments, including here in the Maritimes. Thanks to funds raised through the IWK BforKai Trust, TREKK includes tools for clinicians to recognize and treat MenB more quickly. Since many meningitis symptoms overlap with other diseases, this module is vital for recognizing MenB early to have positive treatment outcomes.

Through the IWK BforKai Trust, Kai's legacy will have an impact on lives across the Maritimes and beyond. Generous community donors are critical to enhancing awareness and education around MenB.

To support the IWK BforKai Trust, visit iwkfoundation.org/bforkai

PROFYLE Creates Hope

Eighty per cent of children and adolescents diagnosed with cancer will be cured. For the remaining 20 per cent, their cancers have either spread, returned, or are resistant to treatment.

The PROFYLE program (short for PRecision Oncology For Young peoLE) brings new hope to patients with hard-to-cure cancers. Patients like Marissa Gootjes of Quispamsis, New Brunswick.

In 2017, 14-year-old Marissa experienced a frightening seizure and scans taken at her local hospital showed what looked to be a brain tumour. She was flown by air ambulance to the IWK, where she underwent an 11-hour neurosurgery and was later diagnosed with glioblastoma, a cancerous brain tumour. While there wasn't a cure, Marissa's team remained optimistic about treatment.

They told the family about PROFYLE—a program that our donors help fund. PROFYLE brings together Canadian leaders in pediatric cancer research and care to identify personalized treatments for young Canadians with advanced cancers. Early into Marissa's treatment, samples of her tumour were sent for genetic sequencing through PROFYLE.

After 13 months of radiation and chemotherapy, the Gootjes' received the best news—Marissa was cancer free. Her mom, Jan, says that the IWK team shared that joy. "They were Team Marissa all the way!"

Today, Marissa is a healthy 19-year-old early childhood education student. She visited the IWK in June 2023 for her annual MRI, which had fantastic results.

PROFYLE offered more encouragement. Before Marissa was in remission, researchers identified four genetic mutations in her tumour, along with a targeted treatment for one of these mutations. This could be used if her cancer was ever to recur.

Ideally, Marissa will never have to use this treatment; but, as Jan explains, "It gives us extra hope, and there's no price that can be put on that."

Donors like you support PROFYLE, investing in research that will change the lives of patients like Marissa. Learn more about Marissa's inspirational story: iwkfoundation.org/marissa

