



HELPING MONEY HEAL

BY TREVOR JANZ MD, VIDAR BOARD VICE CHAIR

The Vidar Foundation is a registered Canadian charity which connects individuals wishing to use their money in positive ways with borrowers needing money to grow socially responsible enterprises; in sustainable agriculture, education, health, cooperatives, and other areas.

Many of these enterprises may not qualify for a standard bank loan because of their lack of collateral or the collective nature of their endeavour. Vidar seeks to overcome this obstacle for socially worthy projects through loan financing based on a number of criteria, including; a sound business plan, an established track record of success, a guarantee community or other nontraditional collateral, and preferably a group of supporting individuals working collectively on the project. When a group of committed individuals work together to fulfill a dream they share, their chances of success are much greater than those of an individual working alone.

Most importantly, however, we promote success and manage risk by establishing a direct personal relationship with the borrowers, whom we are willing to support because we believe in the worthiness of their project and their ability to succeed.

The Vidar Foundation began 36 years ago, as a loan community organized by Helmut Krause in Toronto in 1979. After his untimely death, it was eventually renewed by Ingrid Belenson with a pledge and loan guarantee group to support the fledgling Ottawa Waldorf school in 1998, and was registered as a non-profit organization in 2001. Vidar currently manage \$750,000 in assets, entrusted to us by 25 investors, and is poised to assume nearly one million more. It is similar in goals and orientation to the much larger Rudolf Steiner Foundation (RSF) established in the United States in 1984, which manages \$104 million dollars in investments. Similar social finance organizations exist in Europe, including the GLS anthroposophical bank in Germany (1974), Triodos Bank

active in the UK, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, and Spain (1980), La Nef in France (1979), and Cultura Sparebank in Norway (1982).

These financial initiatives are grounded in the ideas of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the founder of Waldorf Schools, biodynamic farming, anthroposophical medicine, and other initiatives. He understood human social life to be an interaction of three spheres; the economic, the cultural, and the political or legal rights sphere. Steiner clearly foresaw the increasing encroachment and domination of economic interests over the political and cultural aspects of modern society, and proposed a healthier way of integrating economic interests into social life. (1) He understood money as the flow or circulation of value between free individuals through many discreet transactions, and stressed that each must become as fully conscious as possible to allow money to heal. He spoke of three kinds of financial transactions; buying/selling, lending/borrowing, and giving/receiving.

Seigfried Finser, in his history of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation, "Money Can Heal", (2) described these three as follows;

"At this stage (buying and selling) support all that we need for life on earth. Whatever we buy stimulates the whole world economy to produce the same product or service again. It is our responsibility to buy what we would like to world to produce for us." In our buying and selling we have the freedom and power to harm or heal our societies and the Earth.

"It is our responsibility to bring soul and human relationship into our lending and borrowing so that human beings are empowered to fulfill their destiny. When RSF lend to a young initiative under the right conditions, individuals group together to fulfil a dream they share. The RSF was created to enable those intending to imbue the movement of money with soul power, to work together collaboratively."

In giving and receiving, we use our money "to transform the world into what we can imagine it to be. It is our responsibility to cherish imaginations that are uplifting and progressive so that our giving/receiving entices the highest possible ideals into existence."

“In the future, as the human being matures and evolves further towards its natural altruistic nature, the circulatory system of money in our human social life will be kept healthy through the incorporation of the highest human ideals into its movement around the globe. We will feel obligated to support each other, recognizing that supporting any one of us helps all of us. We will not be able to bear the want or suffering of any other soul. It will be so obvious to us that the harm any one of us endures lames every other one of us. Money will no longer be an object, but a sustaining worldwide movement regulated by our higher selves and a means to provide support to empower each other towards deeds for the good in all of us.”

In order for our money to move us towards this lofty goal, we are encouraged to take a direct and active interest in what we are buying, where our money is, who we are lending it to, and for what purpose. When we invest in an anonymous mutual fund, we are disconnected from who we are lending our money to, and what they are using it for. These funds hold shares in major corporations whose sole objective may be to make money, whatever the environmental, social, or moral cost. As free individuals, we are responsible for where our money is, and what effect it is having on all the lives it touches. We can make our lending relationships more conscious, and imbue our money with intention and power, by knowing who we are supporting, and helping them bring a dream we can share to fruition in the world. The Vidar Foundation has direct personal relationship with each of our borrowers, and through the board, we commit the funds of our investors and their intentions to the success of each project.

Our first project was in cooperation with the Ottawa Waldorf School in Ontario, who needed help with the expansion of a two classroom Kindergarten-Nursery wing. The Vidar Foundation suggested to the school community that a pledge and loan guarantee group be formed, and the idea was enthusiastically embraced. Vidar obtained the loan money from individuals and several enterprises from the wider community. The school was able to pay back with interest over three years the loans obtained against the pledges and guarantees. The enrolment of the school increased significantly within the year.

In 2006 the toy store, La Grande Ourse in Montreal, Quebec had to find a new home. The store provides a wide range of wooden and soft toys, workshops for parents and puppet shows for children, as well as children's books and anthroposophical literature. A two storey building was purchased with the help and support of the local community. The ground floor houses the store while the upper floor is rented out for various cultural activities. When bridge money was needed, the Vidar Foundation was able to extend a loan secured via several loan guarantees.

Sunnivue Farm is an organic biodynamic farm located near Ailsa Craig, about half an hour northwest of London, Ontario. It is held in trust by the ROSE Land Care Association, whose aims are to protect agricultural land, support organic biodynamic farming and gardening, build bridges between the urban and rural communities, and provide a wholesome and therapeutic environment where families and school classes as well as helpers and apprentices can visit and experience farm work. When their living quarters needed to be enlarged, a dedicated group of people who actively support ROSE and Sunnivue and a loan from Vidar Foundation helped to transform a rough attic storage space into a comfortable living space for an additional farmer. The loan was secured through loan guarantees.

In July of 2010, Vidar Foundation extended a loan to the Christian Community of Vancouver, British Columbia, to allow renovation of an apartment in the lower floor of the manse, which the community rents out for extra income to cover capital expenses. The work to be done was substantial, as it involved structural elements of the building, and in order to keep costs down, a lot of the work was done by volunteers.

In 2015 we provided a first mortgage to the South Shore Waldorf School and kindergarten in Blockhouse, Nova Scotia, which enabled them to buy their property and enlarge the school. This was accomplished through a borrowing and lending community established by Vidar, and much volunteer labour from a committed group of families working together.

We are currently seeking investors for two worthy Waldorf schools ready to expand; one very young and vigorous, and one more mature. The six year old Okanagan Waldorf School near Vernon, BC, is building a larger Early Childhood Center to expand

their outreach, kindergarten program, and enrolment. They have already secured \$800,000 in grants and gifts for their building, which is going up this month. The well established Halton Waldorf School in Burlington is now 30 years old, with 200 students, and is ready to take the last big step and open a high school.

Both schools are financially sound, with track records of balanced budgets and steady growth, committed and energetic faculties and boards, and assets in land and buildings that far exceed the loan amounts needed. Both schools have had very significant contributions of time and money from their parent communities, and each needs about \$500,000 more to help them grow and thrive.

The Vidar Foundation is always looking for worthy projects in Canada of social merit, with a sound business plan, established track record, and preferably a group of committed individuals working together toward a shared vision. We can work with you to help realize your dream.

The Vidar Foundation is also looking for lenders who want their savings money to work for good in the world. Together we can help your money heal.

Look us up on our website at vidarfoundation.org or on our Facebook page at [vidar foundation](https://www.facebook.com/vidarfoundation) You can contact us at vidarfoundation@gmail.com

(1) Rudolf Steiner "Towards Social Renewal; Rethinking the Basis of Society" Rudolf Steiner Press 1999

(2) Siegfried E. Finser "Money Can Heal; Evolving Our Consciousness" SteinerBooks 2006