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Underground Gym founder Peter Panetta, with volunteers Tabitha Papassay and Katalya Hilton, move equipment around the gym to make room for the abundance of donated items that keep arriving. The gym is filled to capacity.

# It's just a rumour

BY BRANDON WALKER  
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## *Underground Gym not closing*

Rumours about the closing of Thunder Bay's Underground Gym and Youth Centre are untrue, its founder said Friday.

Peter Panetta believes the rumours might have started because some of the Thunder Bay centre's equipment was loaned to the Winnipeg Underground Gym that opened in the spring.

"We took half of what we had here and brought it over there — weights, treadmills, rowers, a bunch of fitness stuff," he said, adding that most of the items were in storage and weren't being used.

"It's on loan over there. It belongs to Thunder Bay but . . . we're just doing what we can over there. We've got stuff in Winnipeg that's being donated," he said.

Thunder Bay's Underground Gym still has plenty of free weights/exercise machines, punching bags and treadmills being used regularly by

young people.

"That stuff will end up coming back to Thunder Bay," Panetta said.

"We still have some stuff in storage right now. We're more than well equipped — I didn't deprive the Thunder Bay gym for Winnipeg," he said.

"I talked to people the last time we had things donated and I asked them if it's OK if it's sent to Winnipeg to help there — I've never had any negative feedback on that," he said.

He said he has also given extra weights to young people in Thunder Bay and some of the Northern First Nation communities.

"That way they can work out on their own, too," he said.

Similar to Thunder Bay's Underground Gym, its Winnipeg counterpart is currently funded through donations from the public, including local businesses and community

groups.

Panetta is still waiting to see if the City of Winnipeg will help pay for some of the costs.

He said Winnipeg's centre is different because it focuses just on fitness and doesn't offer as many activities for youth as are provided here.

"They're all working out (in Winnipeg). There's boxing there too and (martial arts)," he said.

In Thunder Bay there is boxing and exercise machines, but youth can also do arts and crafts, take piano lessons, and receive help with a homework tutor.

Panetta is hoping to eventually add a kitchen to the Winnipeg centre similar to the one in Thunder Bay.

"They have the same problem as here — hungry kids. We've only been open two months, but we're looking at (adding a kitchen) in the future," he said.