CANADA'S VOLUNTEER AWARDS 2018

CULTIVATING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM AND ENTERPRISE





Cultivating Social Responsibility Through Volunteerism and Enterprise (Canada's Volunteer Awards 2018)

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Fuelled by passion and a desire to make a difference, some of Canada's leading volunteers discuss how they and others support people and change communities for the better.





2018 Canada Volunteer Award Recipients gather in Ottawa on December 4th and 5th at the Canadian Museum of Nature to receive their awards and discuss issues related to volunteerism, social responsibility and social innovation.

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Social responsibility can no longer be considered optional. "It is what everyone needs to do," says Sue Duguay, a recipient of the Emerging Leader award for Atlantic Canada.

The Government of Canada's Social Innovation and Social Finance Steering Group – made-up of 16 passionate and diverse leaders, practitioners and experts from multiple fields responsible for co-developing recommendations for a social innovation and finance strategy with the Government of Canada – would tend to agree.

According to the recent report *Inclusive Innovation*, "...communities still face persistent and complex social problems that affect some groups more than others, such as Indigenous people, seniors, youth, immigrants, and women fleeing violence. New and innovative approaches are required to tackle these social issues."

This is a topic that Canada's Volunteer Awards (CVA) recipients were asked to tackle when they gathered in Ottawa on December 4th and 5th, 2018.

Every year, CVA brings together award recipients to recognize their significant contributions to Canadian communities. In addition to receiving their award, recipients are invited to a two-day forum to discuss and share their know-ledge, experience, and ideas related to volunteerism on a broad range of topics.

The forum provides an inspiring opportunity for current and past award recipients and stakeholders to enhance and expand their networks, and gives them access to like-minded socially-conscious individuals and organizations from across the country. The rich and wide-ranging discussions advance participants' collective understanding of good practices in community leadership and partnerships across sectors.

This year, forum discussions focussed on how various actors can join forces to leverage and encourage volunteerism through social innovation to address the social needs of individuals, families and communities.

Social innovation and responsibility

Social innovation can be broadly defined as developing new solutions to social or economic challenges. It can improve people's quality of life through collaborating with new partners, testing creative ideas and measuring their impact.

Social innovation often involves collaboration across different levels of government, charities, the not-for-profit and private sectors to act on a common social issue.

In its summary report *Recognizing Volunteering in 2017*, Volunteer Canada cites leading author Stuart Emmett who defines individual social responsibility (ISR) as "the continuing commitment to behave ethically and contribute to people's development while improving the quality of life of other individuals, groups, teams, as well as society at large."

On the business side, corporate social responsibility (CSR) means going beyond compliance with legal requirements by voluntarily taking responsibility for a business's impact on society by integrating social and environmental concerns into their everyday operations.

As one forum participant put it: "when a corporate entity sees itself as a **member** of its community and acts accordingly by being accountable to its community, being aware of its value within its community, and sharing its knowledge, it can truly play a role in advancing the common good."

So, what is the connection between volunteering and corporate and individual social responsibility, and how much does it really matter to social innovation? According to the recipients of Canada's 2018 volunteer awards: a lot!



Who are CVA recipients?

There are 21 recipients of Canada's Volunteer Awards each year. They represent a cross-section of the country from coast to coast. The Canada's Volunteer Awards program is designed to be **for** Canadians **by** Canadians. Nominations for the awards are submitted annually, assessed by volunteer regional reviewers, and further reviewed by a national advisory committee that selects the finalists.

Twenty recipients are chosen to represent five regions of Canada (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, and British Columbia and the North) in four categories:

- Community Leader: awarded to outstanding individual volunteers or groups of volunteers who have taken a lead role in developing solutions to social challenges in communities;
- Emerging Leader: awarded to volunteers between the ages of 18 and 30 who have demonstrated leadership and helped to build stronger communities;
- Social Innovator: awarded to not-for-profit organizations and social enterprises that address social challenges in innovative ways; and
- Business Leader: awarded to businesses and social enterprises that demonstrate social responsibility in their practices, including promoting and facilitating volunteerism locally, regionally, or nationally.

The national Thérèse Casgrain Lifelong Achievement Award is given to a dedicated individual who has volunteered for at least 20 years and has inspired



Mr. Harold Empey (centre), 2018 recipient of the Thérèse Casgrain Lifelong Achievement Award for volunteering; with Lise Casgrain (left) and the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Employment and Social Development Canada (right).

other volunteers, led volunteer groups or made other exceptional achievements through volunteering. Their contributions can be through on-going commitments to one organization or cause, or separate commitments to a variety of organizations or causes.

A shift in business culture

Lobbying and financial contributions were once mainstays for businesses to advance and advocate for social causes. While those still remain important influencing tools, businesses have also started donating their time, resources and talent through volunteerism.

Ellie Nordstrom and Jen Hamilton shared how ENMAX Corporation, the Business Leader Award recipient from the Prairies, organized 'zoo days' for staff who are young dads to accompany homeless children and children affected by autism around the zoo.

"The response was amazing! We saw employees who hadn't volunteered in their 30 or more years with the company go out and spend some time with kids... We're continuing to build on that [breakthrough] and to find other opportunities for them [and others]."

Nowadays, there are increasing numbers of employer-supported volunteer programs that are introduced, incentivized, institutionalized, and supported throughout the business. This culture shift is shown to be most successful when senior managers set the example by volunteering regularly themselves while also authorizing volunteer hours for staff, cheerleading and rewarding them for their own volunteer initiatives.

Dr. Aslam Daud, Chairman at Humanity First, and a CVA alumni, shared that he knew of a company that held an international competition in which its various departments partnered with charity and humanitarian organizations to develop proposals for how to benefit a maximum number of people.

The company assigned its employees time to work with the organizations on developing the proposals, which meant that the company was paying its employees to spend company time working on volunteer projects where their expertise was directly useful.

"The 'buzz' created by the competition helped to shift the company's organizational culture towards volunteerism," said Dr. Daud.

What's important is that organizations, whether for-profit or not, get creative and provide a range of opportunities, and that everyone is aware of the business' volunteerism expectations.

"Employee incentive and company match programs such as those offered by TransCanada and Tangerine, are two examples of effective strategies to reward volunteerism in business", said Lindsay Alves representing Tangerine, Business Leader Award recipient from Ontario.

Businesses will often volunteer within their areas of expertise, but increasingly they are also creating an environment within the organization where employees are supported to volunteer in their own areas of interest, as demonstrated by ENMAX.

The intersection between corporate and individual social responsibility

There is a broad spectrum of personal engagement and when it comes to behaving ethically and contributing to people's development and quality of life. It includes personal decisions related to environmental footprint, what one purchases, choice of employer, charitable donations, and even vacations. It also ranges from informal 'helping out' to more formal 'volunteering'.



Forum participants highlighted that with sound volunteer engagement strategies, the intersection between corporate and individual social responsibility can be leveraged effectively. For businesses, this means designing meaningful projects that entice volunteers and align with their personal interests, life choices, and abilities. When you find a way to connect with what matters to someone who cares and wants to make a difference, they'll continue to give of themselves and their time.

Paul Nguyen, Ontario's Community Leader Award recipient shared how the Jane and Finch project in Toronto that creates unique opportunities for at-risk youth, is an example of effective volunteer alignment. It motivates people to invest in their community because it reflects back what is already wonderful and working well there. Helping people to see their community with more optimistic, friendly eyes can motivate them to take pride in, take care of, and take action for it.

Volunteer projects or fundraising initiatives where the outcomes can be clearly seen are also more motivating for people. Many volunteer organizations still need to get better at how they demonstrate impact to make volunteer efforts more measurable and reduce ambiguity.

The David McAntony Gibson Foundation – GlobalMedic, Social Innovator Award recipient from Ontario assembles kits for emergency missions. Founder Rahul Singh highlighted how his organization helps volunteers understand the difference they can make by breaking down and communicating each

volunteer effort into its exact monetary value. For instance, letting volunteers know, "you just helped us double the size of this aid shipment."

When thinking of community, we tend to think about the people in our industry or our immediate surroundings; the people we normally interact with. In reality though, everyone is a stake-holder. The challenge for organizations is to turn passive stakeholders into active ones.

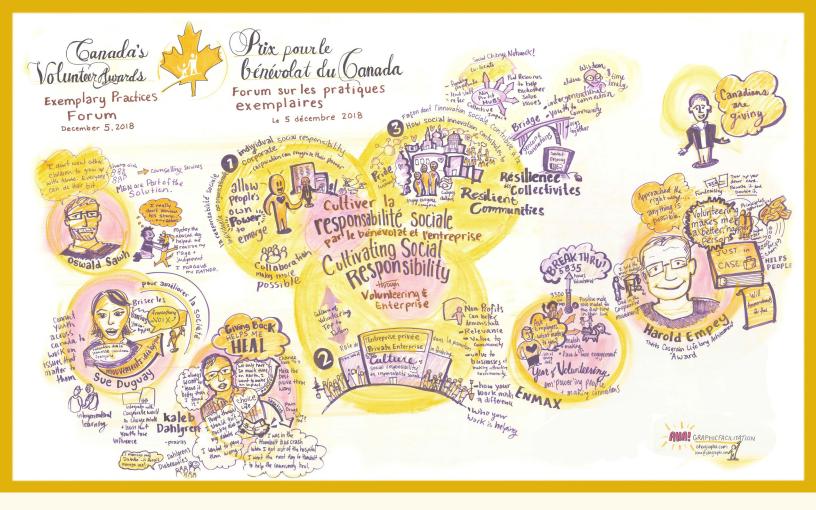
By aligning volunteer activities to people's interests and ability, while at the same time making sure volunteers are aware of the difference they make; it is possible for businesses to recruit enthusiastic, socially-conscious individuals and guide them along the individual/social responsibility spectrum from individual action towards greater collective participation and leadership.



Clockwise from top left:
2018 CVA recipients Sue Duguay,
Paul Nguyen, Rahul Singh (GlobalMedic),
Sierra Love Arusha Centre Society),
Lindsay Alves (Tangerine), and Elly Nordstrom
and Jennifer Hamilton (ENMAX Corporation).



When a corporate entity sees itself as a member of its COMMUNITY, it can truly play a role in advancing the COMMON GOOD.



Graphic recording representing the variety of topics discussed by 2018 Canada Volunteer Award recipients, alumni, stakeholders and guests in Ottawa at the Canadian Museum of Nature, on December 4th and 5th 2018.

Building personal and community resilience

Genuine connections are at the heart of resilience. Community is not just where you live, it's what you're a part of, what you join, and what you create. In resilient communities, people don't fall through the cracks, because they take care of each other. Resilience means that support networks are in place to handle both day-to-day challenges and extraordinary ones. Resilience also makes a huge difference if disaster strikes.

The voluntary sector is vital to building resilience, because it creates spaces where community can come together and grow.

For some organizations, breaking social isolation and building community resilience are explicit goals. For others, they are the positive outcomes of people coming together in service of a different goal, for instance cleaning up a park.

An example of resilience as this secondary benefit is Calgary Dollars. Sierra Love representing the Arusha Centre Society, Social Innovator Award recipient for the Prairies, shared that on the surface Calgary Dollars is a local currency initiative. However, underlying that is community economic development supporting local business. It also supports vulnerable people by providing new sources of supplementary

income and opportunities to connect with others, enhancing financial literacy, and creating opportunities for people to get involved with their communities. Above all, it is about creating inclusive, resilient communities.

Building community resilience means **investing in people's skills** rather than only providing services. This helps tackle social issues while also encouraging social entrepreneurship. Resilient volunteers in turn contribute to making their communities resilient.

At one group table, a participant shared how the Growing Futures program at Ottawa's Parkdale Food Centre (past recipient of the Social Innovator Award) has youth building their skills now so that they can become entrepreneurs later.

Providing learning and skills development opportunities as part of volunteering initiatives is a great way to incentivize people to give of their time while contributing to both personal and broader community resilience. It also boosts morale and sustains commitment. For every volunteer who benefits from developing their skills, the community will benefit in turn.

The Lo-Se-Ca Foundation in Alberta, past recipient of the Social Innovator Award, focuses on improving the quality of life of people with disabilities. Representative Carmen Horpestad shared how they run a thrift store as a source of funding for their programs. Volunteers at the shop receive training as cashiers and bookkeepers and learn basic business concepts including providing a positive customer service experience. These skills and experiences then help them to advance professionally.

Enhancing capacity and capability also reduces dependency. Cuts for Kids, an organization invited to participate at this year's discussion, is a charitable organization that aims to improve the self-esteem of youth through free community haircuts in Ottawa. Founder Ibrahim Musa shared that the organization started off by having volunteers from other communities go into a community to offer the service. After a while, they started training young people within recipient communities, who began to offer the service to others, proving that reducing dependency on external donors makes the model more sustainable.

Participants discussed how, as a result of the work they do, volunteers are often exposed to many of the unpleasant aspects of human and social experience. Thus, volunteer fatigue must be considered. Organizations that adequately prepare and support their volunteers mentally, physically, and socially to take on the tasks they are being asked to do help their volunteers to be successful while also building personal resilience.



Nurturing Individual Social Responsibility

We need to engage young people if we want to ensure the future of volunteerism in support of social innovation. More can be done to steer young people's career choices towards social responsibility.

There is a role for both private enterprise and the not-for-profit sector in inviting the next generation into the volunteer sector. Employers need to take measures to implement programs that stimulate volunteerism amongst youth and that empower youth to take action as well as influence their career choices towards the common good.

This shouldn't be difficult: community service presents a valuable opportunity for young people to develop skills and make contacts. Also, younger employees increasingly want to be part of organizations that take a holistic approach to compensation. This can include promoting work-life balance and supporting volunteer initiatives as a way to give back.

Forum participants had several ideas about how to encourage a culture of volunteerism among people both young and old.

Organizations need to engage people from a young age – preferably before the age of ten. More universities could encourage volunteerism amongst their students by building in community service learning into their curriculum, so that time spent volunteering goes towards course credits.

Participants' organizations also use a range of approaches to bring people together including those who would probably not otherwise interact. Their examples included: inviting young children and their parents to volunteer together, matching up youth and seniors in skills exchanges (handicrafts, cooking, music), and encouraging new immigrants to volunteer as a way to integrate into their new life.

Several award recipients noted that they were 'summoned' by others to begin volunteering. This is a reminder for everyone in all sectors of the importance of constantly inviting others in. After all, a lot of people want to help but simply don't know how.



Collaborate to innovate

Competition for very scarce resources between not-for-profits is so fierce that it often stifles creativity and innovation. This makes multi-sector collaboration critical to addressing the social innovation challenge.

True collaboration between for-profit and not-for-profit actors requires an acknowledgement that the success of each benefits the other.

Not-for-profits play a huge role in improving the quality of life in communities that in turn benefits the private sector by helping to attract and retain qualified employees to those same communities.

Gerald Mak, Emerging Leader Award recipient for Ontario, noted that the private sector can play a vital role by boosting the innovative capacity of the not-for-profit sector. He shared that one of the things that he likes to remind people about is the value of the "three Ps": public-private partnerships. With-out these, he says, it is almost impossible to get big creative ideas started.

Partnerships are more effective when a long-term relationship and specific outcomes are the goal. This allows corporate and not-for-profit entities to build programs together over time, collaborate as equals, and share accountability.

While partnerships are critical to nurturing innovation, participants cautioned that they must be balanced and structured in such a way that not-for-profits establish clear parameters for corporate involvement, so they stay true to their mission.

It's also important to recognize that volunteering is a collaboration aimed at achieving some kind of greater purpose while all parties involved experience benefit.

A greater role for the public sector?

Participants noted that they would be remiss in talking about the resilience of the volunteer community without acknowledging the role governments play in helping build that resilience.

The public sector has the power to accelerate and facilitate innovation through multi-sectoral collaboration. For example, municipalities often provide matching grants.

The public-private investment is another innovative model. Several cities now have incubator hubs that act as innovation zones – spaces for social enterprises to apply to and get free help, which would otherwise not be possible.

From the public policy perspective, governments might consider exploring the tax credits to make volunteer hours tax deductible, such as what is presently done for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue. This could help to incentivize and boost volunteerism across the country.

Additionally, instead of what is currently an extremely time-consuming and competitive process for accessing funds between not-for-profits, a central body might be established to manage project proposals and set priorities.

Finally, government organizations should formally recognize volunteer efforts within their own organizations – as the Canada's Volunteer Awards and others do – to promote a culture of volunteerism within governments.

Establish a community of practice

Leaders in the volunteer/not-for-profit sector need to connect more often with other leaders.

Participants highlighted the frustration they and other volunteer leaders feel and the inefficiency of working in silos.

Inspired by being in a room together for two days sharing their successes and ideas, participants suggested that volunteer organizations would benefit from ways to network in order to better share best practices, knowledge, and skills, and to match skills with needs.

They proposed that this could be done through local, regional, or national meet-ups, while legacy programs could be created so one generation can pass the baton to the next.

Perhaps a website or some other mechanism could allow for recipients of the Canada's Volunteer Awards and others to develop into a community of practice that shares ideas, skills and resources, and could eventually lead to more direct collaboration. Almost as if on cue, Tina Walter, Director of Performance Management and Recognition, also responsible for Canada's Volunteer Awards, shared that a CVA alumni network is being established to support volunteers across Canada into the future with the intention of helping to address that need.

Related Links

- Volunteer Canada
- Canada Service Corps
- Government of Canada Social Innovation and Social Finance Steering Group



For every **VOLUNTEER**

who benefits from developing their skills,

the **COMMUNITY**

will benefit in turn.

Volunteerism's
Transformative Power

People enter into the sector in very different ways, for totally different reasons, at different times in their lives. Some are motivated by a general desire to contribute, or because they were asked. Others begin by taking action to improve what they see right in front of them: a mother's child is not receiving adequate support from the state, a restaurant owner sees homeless people congregating beside his restaurant daily, a teenager sees a use for his passion for videography right in his neighbourhood.

Despite these vastly different points of entry, people seem to stay involved for similar reasons: not only for the good they are doing for others, but also because they find volunteering to be personally enriching and even transformative. For many volunteers, there is joy in helping just one person, but also a sense of being part of a broader positive social transformation towards a more caring, just, and sustainable society.

What follows are some additional quotes and statements by CVA recipients. It is hoped that readers will find connection and inspiration through them.



Harold L. Empey

Thérèse Casgrain Lifelong Achievement Award

"It was in 1945 that I did my first volunteer deal. A group of us were taken to another town in an army truck to sell tickets on this army truck to build something in the community. I sold more tickets than anybody else and I was hooked!"

"The list of things that I've done is really not important. It is just to tell you that it has been a wonderful ride."

Volunteer areas include: community activism, fundraising and awareness campaigns, emergency and death preparedness, polio eradication, socio-political transitions



Marché Ferdous (Ala Jabur)

Business Leader, Quebec

"We did this because of where we came from originally, from Iraq, a country that passed through very difficult times. Many wars. Many disasters. Dictatorship... It was destroyed completely... And decent people of Iraq, even university professors, middle class people, were in need of food and passed through famine. And I know that hunger touches the dignity of people. This is the worst thing that can happen to people."

"We don't deserve all that credit, really, because what we do, we do from the bottom of our hearts."

Volunteer areas include: food security, skills development, immigrant integration





Kaleb Dahlgren

Emerging Leader, Prairies

"I think the big thing for me is about giving back. Because I never had a positive influence [with diabetes] in my life and I wanted to be that for the children, and so a lot of the children that are with the program now have gone on to do school presentations, give back, and help out. I think that is the biggest thing for me: being that support and being there for them."

Volunteer areas include: diabetes, social media, community activism, sport, youth role model



Sukhmeet Singh Sachal

Emerging Leader, British Columbia and the North

"I grew up in India... On my fifth birthday... I went to this place and I saw a child shackled by his feet to a broken bed. This was an image so striking that it created within me a conscience to help others. When I saw this child, I was shocked... I decided that every single birthday, I'm going to dedicate it towards helping other people. I used to get my birthday presents every single year and I would just give it off to the other kids at [that centre]."

Volunteer areas include: anti-bullying, solidarity with marginalized groups, public speaking, Northern youth leadership





Audrey Burt
Community Leader, Quebec

"What started off as a passion ended up being my life's work...
[My son] is my compass; we started it all for him... I believe that regardless of what situation we're born into, everybody has the right to live their best life possible. And I truly believe that, and so I'm going to kick and scream my way to ensure that my son will have a space to call his own, and other people like him on the spectrum as well."

Volunteer areas include: autism services, awareness, and education



Arusha Centre Society (Sierra Love)

Social Innovator, Prairies

"I really feel that volunteerism really makes a difference in people's lives in all different areas. Volunteering has always been a source for personal growth and for giving back to my community."

Volunteer areas include: social justice, environment, economic sustainability



Japanese Community Volunteers Association (David Iwaasa)

Social Innovator, British Columbia and the North

"Volunteer work is considered to be working for others, but you learn in the process, that you are working on yourself. It is a pleasure to serve, and the involvement of our volunteers is critical."

Volunteer areas include: senior inclusion, community support





Oswald R.D. SawhCommunity Leader, Prairies

"Volunteerism has been very therapeutic for me... I notice that it's almost a healing to volunteer, because you're healing yourself and others. You're helping others and that goes back to you. That's what I take from volunteering: it is that in giving, you're receiving as well."

Volunteer areas include: abuse, domestic violence, anger prevention, humane society, Indigenous issues



Sue Duguay Emerging Leader, Atlantic

"We have to realize the power that a movement can have, especially these days, because it is not only about coming together around an organization or an idea, but the concept of rallying around movements. We talk about creating a better society through movements. So, when a person has succeeded in getting involved with several movements, we've created a better society."

Volunteer areas include: youth political activism, official languages, youth community engagement



Paul NguyenCommunity Leader, Ontario

"I didn't set out to be an activist and that's not a label I wanted to call myself, but I think everyone there who grows up in a tough neighbourhood is an activist at heart."

Volunteer areas include: marginalized and at-risk youth, using media for community engagement, positive journalism



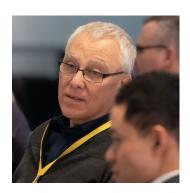


Cornelis Zandbergen

Community Leader, British Columbia and the North

"I feel that by sharing my experiences and showing my dedication and what we have to offer our province, I feel that our new volunteers have left the course feeling that they've made the correct choice in becoming a volunteer. Many of them have also become leaders in their respective communities."

Volunteer areas include: first responder, local and international Red Cross, fundraising



David Bradley

Community Leader, Atlantic

"Ours is a story of community revitalization in the face of economic decline. But I think it is also a story about how to make a community more appealing for people to live in and a better place for them overall."

Volunteer areas include: community and economic development, heritage and culture



ENMAX Corporation (Elly Nordstrom and Jennifer Hamilton)

Business Leader, Prairies

"We will continue to connect people in the community and power their potential. After all, that's what we do."

Volunteer areas include: corporate volunteer engagement





Gerald MakEmerging Leader, Ontario

"Because one of the major things is it's important to volunteer because we need to give back to the community. If I have the ability to connect those different people to help them get those funds – or whether it is to work together and so forth – I think that is what we need to do as volunteers."

Volunteer areas include: youth community involvement, youth role model, entrepreneurship, fundraising, community committee participation



David McAntony Gibson Foundation – GlobalMedic (Rahul Singh)

Social Innovator, Ontario

"If you have a group of civic-minded folks that want to volunteer and you want to drive out to drive down the cost of aid so that we can get it to these crisis zones, I guarantee you that my people will always be there to provide hope and get aid out the door."

Volunteer areas include: aid and disaster relief, partnerships, innovation



PEI Credit Unions (Katherine Ryan and David Chapman)Business Leader, Atlantic

"Whether it is coordinating an event or helping out with a sports team, whatever the need is, we are always pretty quick to rise to the occasion in our community. And that just goes back again to how we are very community minded and do everything for the betterment of our members and our community."

Volunteer areas include: community and corporate volunteer engagement, financial literacy, fundraising



Sébastien Verger Leboeuf

Emerging Leader, Québec

"We talk a lot about sharing is caring, giving, and intergeneration transfer of knowledge. Without these, I wouldn't be here today because it is mainly due to adults or older people that I am here today. I started at the age of 15, when my father pushed me to give classes on boating safety. My father pushed me then, and I am glad because it helped me progress. And now I love working with kids, because they are curious and want to see and learn everything."

Volunteer areas include: search and rescue, fundraising, training and skills development, community organizer



Yellowknife Direct Charge Co-operative (Donald Babey)

Business Leader, British Columbia and the North

"We're really committed to our community in a way that I think is different than a for-profit business that has a financial bottom line. Where we certainly need to make money, we need to keep our organization going, we also have a really strong commitment to our community and having a strong interconnection amongst all of the people where we live and really having Yellowknife be the best community that it can be."

Volunteer areas include: food security, community engagement, fundraising





Choices for Youth (Sheldon Pollett)

Social Innovator, Atlantic

"None of what we do is possible without a significant number of volunteers in our community, including now my own 16-year-old daughter, who is loving every minute of it. Because that's what it takes. It takes an entire community to have the kind of impact we need to have on a significant number of young people across this country who, quite frankly, are in harm's way."

Volunteer areas include: at-risk youth, homelessness, supportive housing, crisis response



Tangerine Bank (Lyndsay Alves)

Business Leader, Ontario

"As a leader in corporate volunteer engagement, we work to support organizations and programs that inspire self-esteem, teamwork, leadership, and encourage a sense of belonging and acceptance. We've built strong relationships with communities through local not-for-profit organizations and inspire our employees and their families, local community members and Canadians nationwide to participate in improving the health of their communities."

Volunteer areas include: self-esteem, teamwork, leadership, partnerships, corporate volunteer engagement



Accueil Bonneau (Aline Bourcier)

Social Innovator, Québec

"We have played a key role among Montreal's homeless population. Its mission is to provide shelter to homeless individuals and to those at risk of becoming homeless, assisting them in meeting their essential needs, integrating into society, getting a roof over their heads, and achieving a better quality of life and well-being."

Volunteer areas include: homeless services, preventative health care, urban beekeeping, social enterprise