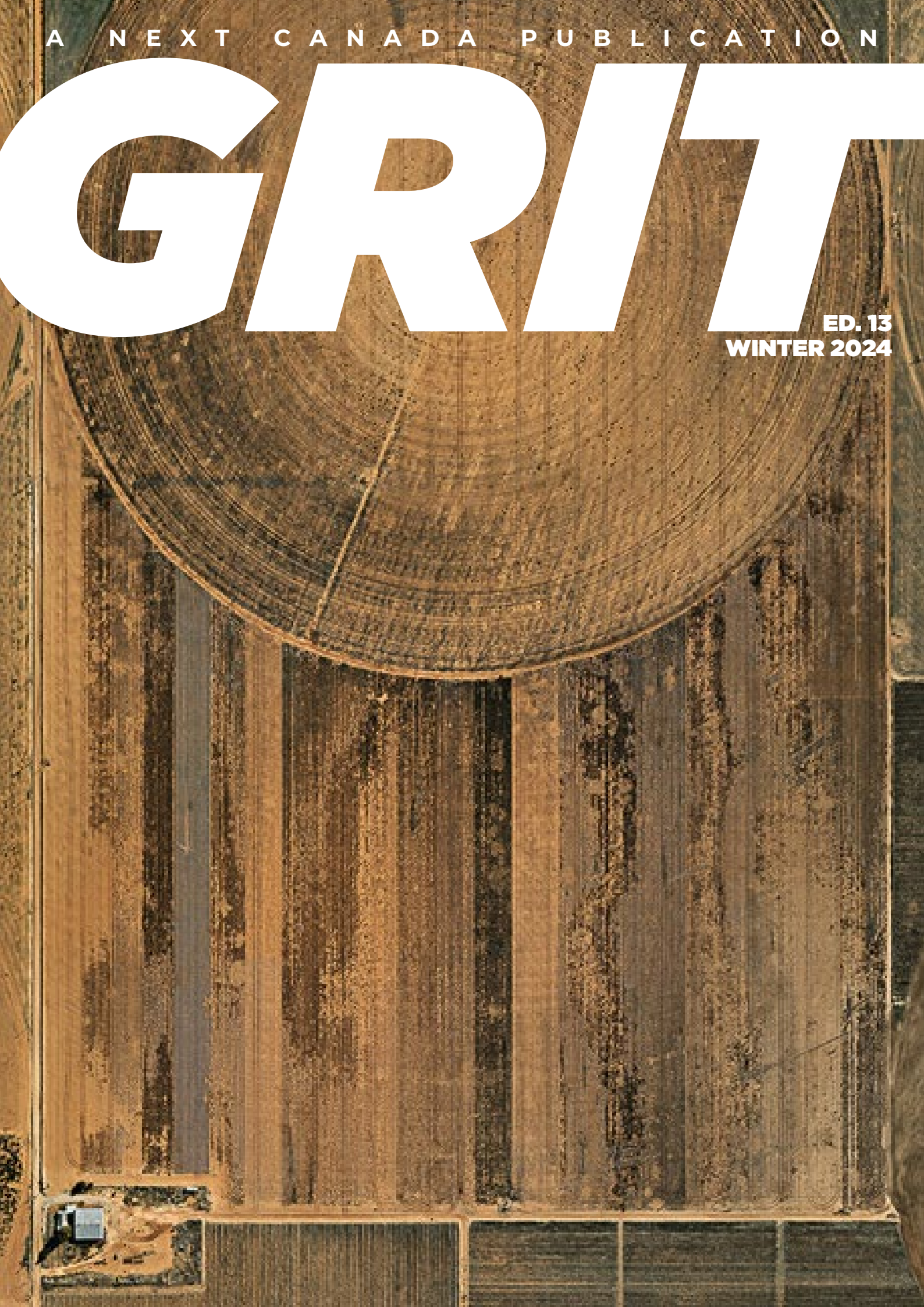


A NEXT CANADA PUBLICATION

# GRIT

ED. 13  
WINTER 2024





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*Saw Mills #1*, Lagos, Nigeria, 2016

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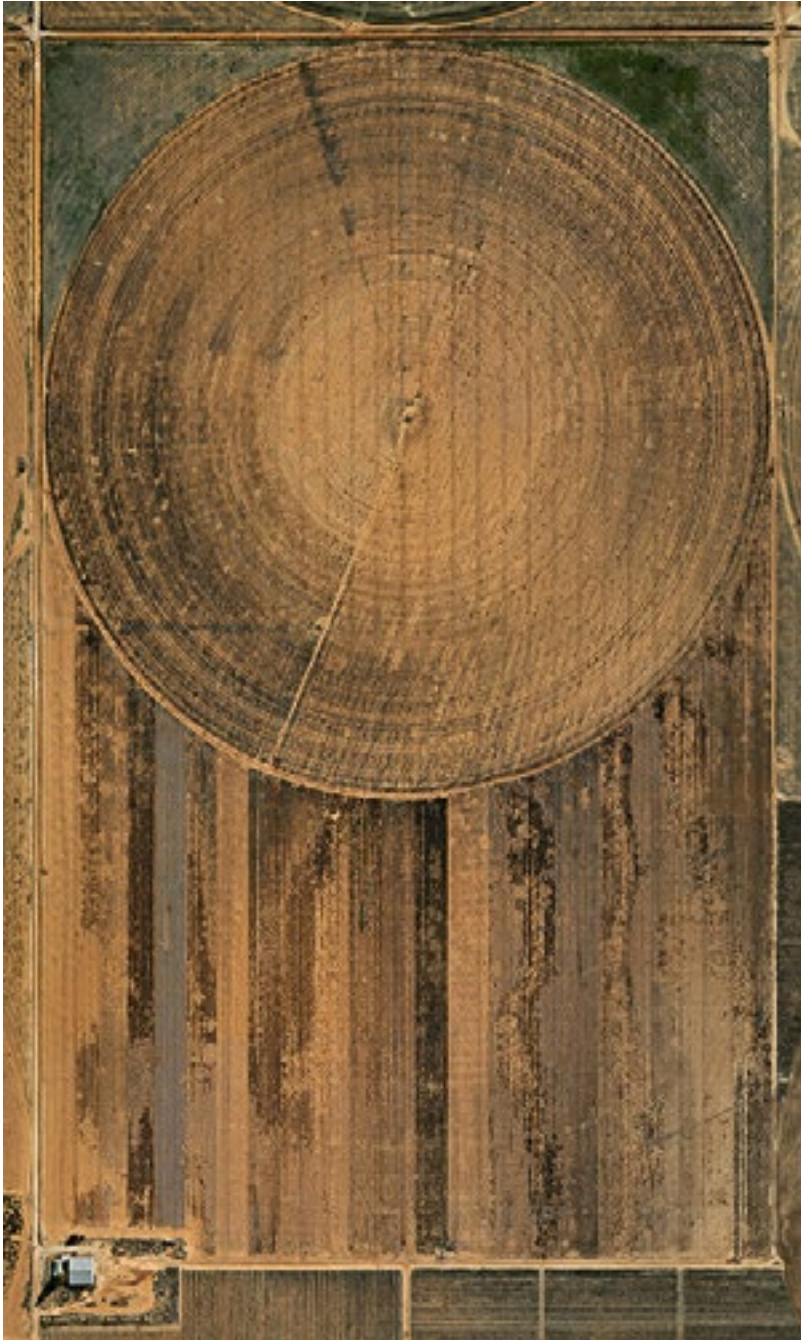
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**10 AI ventures to watch**

Kyle J. Winters



# Greetings, GRIT readers!



PHOTOS © EDWARD BURTYNSKY, COURTESY NICHOLAS METIVIER GALLERY, TORONTO

**Pivot Irrigation #2**  
High Plains, Texas Panhandle, USA, 2011  
(Detail featured on Cover)

**AS WE WELCOME A NEW YEAR**, it brings me great pleasure to introduce the latest edition of GRIT Magazine, a collection of stories that delve into “The Big Picture” — a narrative that transcends individual endeavors to spotlight the collective efforts shaping a sustainable future.

Recently, I found myself engaged in a conversation with an international cohort of business accelerators. The topic of sustainability took center stage, and serendipitously, I was queried about NEXT Canada’s stance on this vital issue. With pride, I shared the results of a survey among our esteemed alumni. The revelation was inspiring — within our network are ventures actively contributing to all 17 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In this edition, we take a panoramic view, exploring how sustainability is not just a buzzword but a cornerstone for the survival of humankind. We are featuring 17 alumni ventures that are stepping up to draw attention to these critical issues, and meeting them head-on with innovative interventions.

This issue features an exclusive interview with Edward Burtynsky, a visionary artist whose breathtaking photos force us to confront society’s impact on our planet. His work is a poignant reminder that every action, no matter how small, contributes to the larger narrative of our shared existence.

Adding depth to our exploration, we are privileged to include an interview with Claudia Hepburn, co-founder of NEXT Canada and current CEO of Windmill Micro-lending. Claudia sheds light on the transformative power of microloans in addressing the first of the UN Sustainable Development Goal.

As you flip through the pages of this issue, you’ll discover myriad stories of resilience, innovation, and commitment to a sustainable future. Each article serves as a testament to the belief that by understanding “The Big Picture,” we can collectively pave the way for positive change.

Your feedback is always welcomed, and your ideas for future issues are eagerly anticipated. Feel free to reach out to me directly, and let’s continue this journey toward a sustainable and thriving world.

With best regards,



**Kyle J. Winters**  
CEO, NEXT Canada

**NEXT**  
CANADA

**“ I am donating to NEXT Canada to eliminate barriers for those who face them.”**

**DANIEL RODIC** (NEXT 36, 2011)

Daniel chose to donate to NEXT Canada so that future aspiring founders can have access to the same opportunities he did.

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## CONTRIBUTORS



From L-R; Claudia Hepburn, Edward Burtynsky, Sandra Odendahl, Jaskaran Chauhan and Eng C.Lau

### **CLAUDIA HEPBURN** – CEO, Windmill Microlending & Co-Founder, NEXT Canada

As the CEO of Windmill Microlending, Claudia Hepburn helps Canada address skilled labour shortages by helping immigrants and refugees restart their careers. Before Windmill, Claudia co-founded and ran NEXT Canada, and helped launch over 1000 entrepreneurs and scale over 500 ventures. She sits on the board of Sick-Kids Foundation and LCBO.

### **EDWARD BURTYNSKY** – Award winning Canadian photographer & artist

Edward Burtynsky, a renowned contemporary photographer with over 40 years of experience, captures the impact of human industry on the planet through striking global industrial landscape photos. His work is featured in 80+ major museums worldwide. In 1985, he founded Toronto Image Works, a facility supporting Toronto's art community. Inspired by early exposure to industrial settings, Burtynsky examines humanity's collective impact on natural landscapes. He has received numerous awards, including the inaugural TED Prize, Governor General's Awards, and the International Center of Photography's Infinity Award. Burtynsky holds eight honorary doctorate degrees and continues to contribute significantly to photography.

### **SANDRA ODENDAHL** – Senior Vice President & Head of Sustainability, Diversity & Partnerships, BDC

With over 25 years of experience in environmental science, corporate sustainability, and responsible finance, Sandra Odendahl currently serves as the Senior Vice President & Head of Sustainability, Diversity & Partnerships at BDC. A trailblazer in the financial sector, Sandra led one of the first environmental risk management teams on Bay Street in 2000.

### **JASKARAN CHAUHAN** – Editor

Currently working at NEXT Canada as the Manager of Stewardship and Office of the CEO, Jaskaran enjoyed a rich and varied professional journey. She has navigated through diverse fields and roles, each contributing to her unique skill set. She enjoys reading and sketching in her free time.

### **ENG C. LAU** - Design Director

Eng C. Lau is a creative and dynamic Art Director who recently joined NEXT Canada on contract. He previously worked as an Art Director for the award-winning magazine, *Men's Fashion*, and *WeddingBells*. Eng manages his time supporting NEXT Canada in both Toronto and Malaysia. His beautiful photography can be enjoyed via his instagram account at @engclau.



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Eng C. Lau



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*Clearcut #1, Palm Oil Plantation, Borneo, Malaysia, 2016*







# THE BIG PICTURE

## IN CONVERSATION WITH EDWARD BURTYNSKY

*Award-winning Canadian  
photographer and artist*



**KYLE J. WINTERS:** Edward, first off thank you for agreeing to do this interview and congratulations on the success of *The Anthropocene Project*. Your ability to capture the impact of human influence on the environment is both breath-takingly beautiful and a rallying cry for action. When you set out to do this project did you have specific goals in mind, and to what extent have these been achieved?

**EDWARD BURTYNSKY:** If there's been a goal in my career to-date, it's been to bear witness to and photograph the largest examples of human industry and ingenuity all around the world, wherever I could gain access to it. And I am an artist first, so I have spent the last 40+ years creating images — inspired by so many photographers before me like Edward Weston and Paul Caponigro, but also artists from the Abstract Expressionism movement — as pieces of art that capture the imagination of a viewer, that reveal the subject in slow moments, that are revelatory and not accusatory. My images have revealed to us what “business as usual” looks like on a planetary scale, beyond our individual worldviews.

*The Anthropocene Project* followed on this trajectory, and actually was born in a moment of conversation between myself and my long-time friend and collaborator, award-winning filmmaker Jennifer Baichwal. We were sitting together after a screening of our 2013 film *Watermark*, and were discussing the term “Anthropocene”, wondering



PHOTOS © EDWARD BURTYNSKY, COURTESY NICHOLAS METVIER GALLERY, TORONTO



PHOTOS © EDWARD BURTYNSKY, COURTESY NICHOLAS METVIER GALLERY, TORONTO

*Breezewood, Pennsylvania, USA, 2008*

aloud how many people actually understood what that meant and how we might help facilitate a larger awareness of the term and the scale of human impact on the natural world. It quickly became clear that unlike our previous collaborations, this would not be a straightforward documentary or a series of photographs, and the project eventually grew into this incredible creature of its own that has now been out in the world for five years, making its way into museums, theatres, classrooms and homes.

If the project's singular goal was to raise awareness, to shift consciousness in order to inspire change and drive action — I do think we've accomplished that. The exhibition alone has been seen by upwards of 700, 000 people. The film continues to screen around the world. The book we created went into a second edition print and is sold out. The education program continues to engage students across Canada and beyond.

Over the course of the last five years, the reality of the climate crisis has only increased and I am grateful that this work is out there — instilling in people a very real sense of urgency but also, I think, a sense of hope. If human ingenuity got us here, then certainly human ingenuity can achieve the solutions needed to pull us out of this situation and course correct.

**Your photographs often explore the intersection of industry and nature, while providing a powerful visual narrative. Is your hope that your viewers see an opportunity for intervention in scenes which seem to argue against this?**

My images are revelations, and more often than not, slow ones at that. It is not always immediately obvious what you are looking at; I am never intending to smack someone over the head with a black and white message. If the clarion call is heard, it's because the viewer has experienced a deeper understanding of the world and our impact and they have been moved emotionally, psychologically in some way. And change cannot happen until the reality sinks in, resonates, "hits home" as it were. This is the power of art.

If there is an opportunity for intervention, it can only come after this experience and even then, I think we all understand that the solutions — similar to the message — are not so black and white. It is not as simple as flipping a switch, or putting a cold turkey end to a specific action or a specific industry. We have entire systems, on which many of our lives are entirely dependent, that are at risk of complete collapse if we think in such binary terms. But we absolutely do have the capacity for change, for just



SOCAR Oil Fields #3, Baku, Azerbaijan, 2006

## WITHOUT A DOUBT ENTREPRENEURS ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES, WHETHER IT'S ON A LOCAL OR GLOBAL SCALE, REGARDLESS OF SMALL BUSINESS OR VAST INDUSTRY.

transitions, for revitalization, for reparations, for restoration. And it will be possible not just where there is opportunity, but where there is willingness.

**Is there a role for entrepreneurs to respond to the narrative of your art, and to potentially drive more sustainable practices within their industries?**

Without a doubt entrepreneurs are some of the biggest drivers of sustainable practices, whether it's on a local or global scale, regardless of small business or vast industry. The beauty of entrepreneurship is that you have a view of what's missing, and the vision and drive to fill that gap. Entrepreneurs are not beholden to the same levels of bureaucracy and boundaries that someone in a large corporation or in government might be. Entrepreneurs,

by definition, are willingly in a position to take major risks and drive major change. It's inherent to the nature of entrepreneurship.

And in a world that is increasingly becoming jaded and hopeless in the face of large corporations, entrepreneurs are in a unique position to step up and lead the way.

**Over your career, you've probably seen a shift in the perception of sustainability in the business community. From your perspective, what are the greatest hurdles that still stand between current business practices and the future that we will need in order to maintain some semblance of sustainability?**

In some ways I have certainly seen a shift in sustainability perspectives, but in other ways, it feels cyclical — a return



to some of the ways in which we used to live and work. In general, though, I do see many businesses really taking the matter seriously now and incorporating it into their daily and annual operations. From a customer perspective, it's actually essential, especially if your customers are from the Millennial and Gen Z demographic. People in these generations will quickly become the largest customer base in the world and they have their finger on the pulse of every imaginable issue, and they now have access to infinite ways to use their voices and demand change. Businesses that neglect to integrate sustainability practices when the market is asking for it, are at risk of hurting their bottom line. Customers are demanding practices that align with their values.

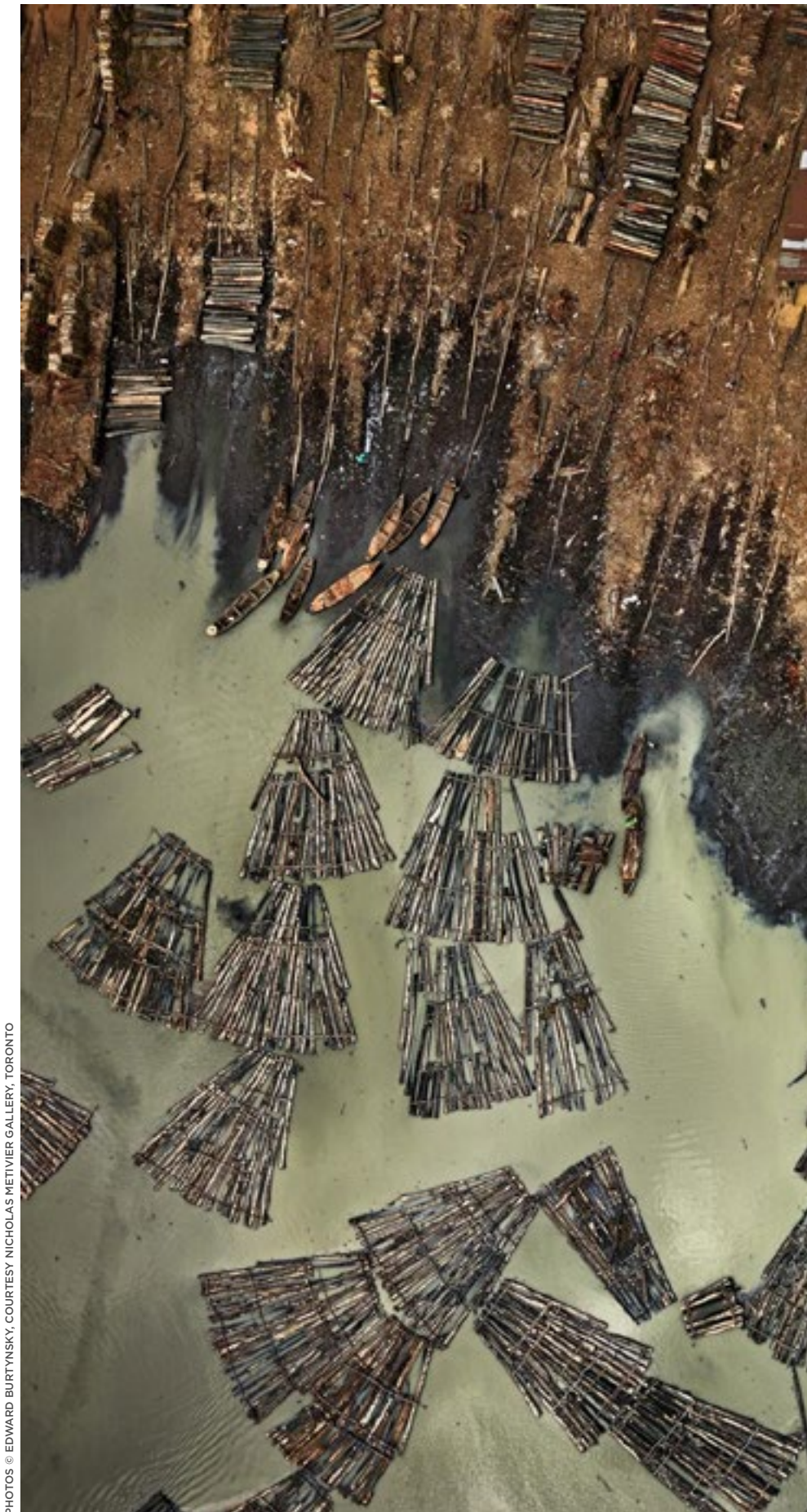
Of course this comes with challenges though, the biggest one being financial. After several years of a pandemic and a marked shift in operational perspectives in general, many businesses are still struggling to adjust to different ways of approaching work. Not only this, but it's actually hard to "do the right thing". The "right thing" now has a price tag associated with it.

If you want to focus on waste management alone, you need to acknowledge that the standard municipal resources available to businesses and individuals alike are flawed and are certainly not enough when trying to engage in sustainable practice. We know that only around 9% of materials (globally) that we recycle actually get recycled; the rest ends up in landfill. And this is just in relation to the items we use daily that have been deemed from a business perspective as "recyclable". What happens to the rest of the materials in our offices and homes? The pens, the pencils, the countless devices, cables, coffee cups, etc. In order to effectively dispose of such things, the business or individual must bear a certain cost and financial resources are also not infinite.

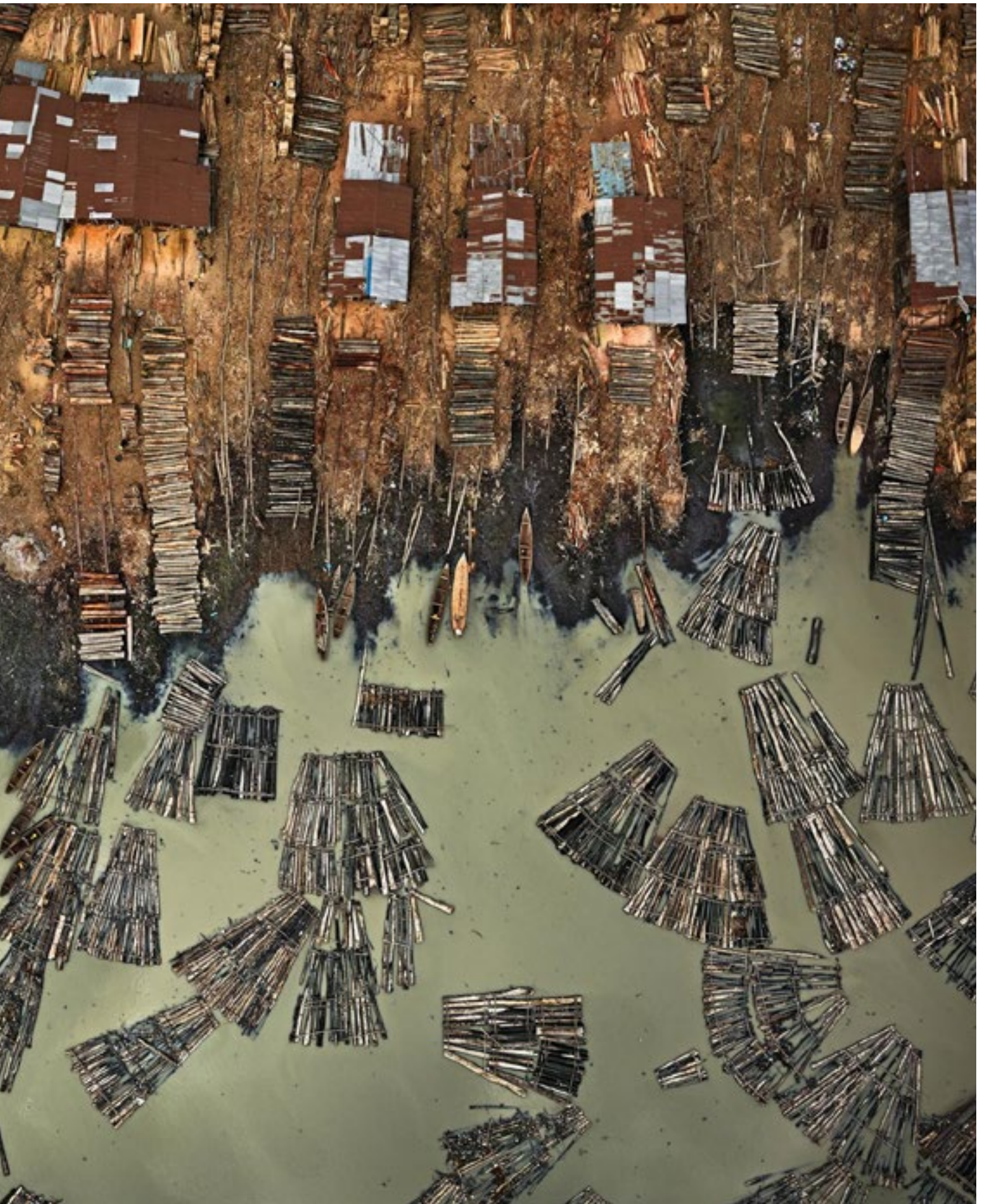
Essentially we need to activate the levels of capitalism to deploy resources, to build the next sustainable world. We also need those who control power and money to not get in the way of these changes. This is not an easy thing to do.

### **What does success look like when you are capturing an image?**

If I take off my business hat, success takes on a whole new meaning when I've got my camera in hand. And I don't think photographic/artistic success can be necessarily defined in broad strokes. "Success" varies per subject,



PHOTOS © EDWARD BURTYNSKY, COURTESY NICHOLAS METIVIER GALLERY, TORONTO



*Saw Mills #1*, Lagos, Nigeria, 2016

per location, per day. Certainly there are those “ah ha!” moments when the light is just right, and I’m in the right place at exactly the right time and I know that moment will result in an incredible image. But other times success is slower, requires more patience, requires me to plant myself in a place for days and wait, and then come back the next year and repeat that cycle until the magic happens.

Other times still, that moment of “success” doesn’t happen until I’ve had some time home from a shoot, and I can gain a renewed perspective once I get to review what I’ve created. Sometimes the successful image is not the one I first thought.

Even then, there are so many images I love — don’t ask me to choose a favourite, it’s like asking someone to name their favourite child — that I think will make a huge impact, will resonate with people, and I’ll then witness the complete opposite when the photographs make their way into the world. I never would have imagined, that my Breezewood image would find itself so embedded in internet meme culture. That kind of “success” is not something I could have imagined or claimed in 2008 when I was standing with my camera on an 80-ft-high scissor lift in a motel parking lot looking at this landscape.

**Collaboration seems integral to your projects, involving scientists and policy-makers. How can entrepreneurs foster meaningful partnerships with experts from different fields to create comprehensive and effective sustainability initiatives? And, looking ahead, what role do you see these collaborations playing in addressing global challenges on a larger scale?**

Collaboration is arguably the most important component and perhaps the only way forward as we look to establish a sustainable present and future. Large scale change will not and cannot happen in silos. Engineers and scientists need the humanities to package their findings, and tell their stories. There are few who will read the IPCC reports from cover to cover, but there are many who will watch a film, or get a book, or visit an exhibition and connect to the subject through the telling of stories.

The solutions required to solve our present challenges will mean interdisciplinary interactions, the cross pollination of information and resources, and shared reach and influence.

Again, it’s not just a matter of where these opportunities arise, but the willingness to put them into action.



PHOTOS © EDWARD BURTYNSKY, COURTESY NICHOLAS METIVIER GALLERY, TORONTO



*Shipbreaking #9a*, Chittagong, Bangladesh 2000





PHOTO BY FX PRODUCTIONS CANADA INC.

Claudia Hepburn in conversation with NEXT Canada CEO, Kyle Winters and NEXT Canada donor, Nancy Lockhart.







**LAST MONTH** I had the incredible opportunity of interviewing the inimitable Claudia Hepburn. Co-founder of NEXT Canada, Claudia is currently leading Windmill Microlending, a national charity that provides affordable loans to skilled immigrants and refugees. For many of them, this small amount helps them get back on their feet and often saves them from long-term underemployment.

As we delved into the details and the impact of the loans, Claudia explained how the charity is working towards fulfilling the first UN Sustainability Goal of 'No Poverty'.

— *Jaskaran Chauhan* ➔

# EMPOWERING NEW BEGINNINGS

1

NO  
POVERTYEnd poverty in all its  
forms everywhere

PHOTO BY ALEKSANDAR LITTLEWOLF

**Thirteen years ago you co-founded NEXT Canada. What are the skills you learnt at NEXT Canada that you are now deploying at Windmill Microlending?**

NEXT Canada was the first organization that I co-founded, built and ran for five years. I learned a lot of skills as a result of finding myself with challenges I hadn't faced before and having to solve them. I also gained important insights from the guest speakers, professors and my cofounders—all of whom brought very different experiences and skills to the table. Of the many lessons I learned, three stand out. One was the importance of the right mindset. I could overcome most hurdles, even without a lot of experience, if I approached the problem with the right combination of confidence, humility and openness. A second important skill I developed was people management—what goes into creating a productive work culture and a high-performance team. Finally, building an organization from scratch requires entrepreneurs to play a lot of different roles and learn about every aspect of their organization, from fundraising and sales, to operations, HR and finance. The experience of managing all those pieces was a good foundation for leading a bigger, rapidly growing organization like Windmill.

**Some of our readers might not be familiar with the concept of microloans. Where did it originate and to what degree are microloans effective?**

Microlending is a concept that was developed to help address poverty in the developing world. Many people can't escape poverty because they lack access to capital and, in many cases, a very small amount can help someone change their trajectory. The concept has most often been applied to help women start small businesses to feed their families and escape extreme poverty. Here in Canada, Windmill Microlending adapted the concept to help immigrants restart their careers and become prosperous, valuable contributors to the Canadian economy and their own families and communities. Windmill's model is different in a number of ways from other microlending as we have adapted it to suit the unique needs of our clients in Canada, but like the original concept it's based on the idea that financial institutions leave a significant number of people underbanked, and without access to the credit they need to prosper. Microlending charities are uniquely suited to providing these types of loans, because they put the wellbeing of their clients first, rather than the interests of investors.

**There have been a lot of success stories around how microloans helped women and other marginalized communities in South America recently. How do you think that compares to microlending in Canada?**

At Windmill Microlending our clients are skilled immigrants and refugees who are looking to gain Canadian accreditation in their profession or get a Canadian

qualification so they can restart their career here. Over half our clients are internationally trained healthcare professionals, and the rest represent a wide variety of other professions—engineering, IT, finance, law, and even truck driving—all of which we have labour shortages in here in Canada. We have served over 10,000 loans since 2005, and deployed nearly \$100 million loan capital. Our average client triples his or her income as a result of an \$11,000 loan.

**Windmill Microlending is described as “profession agnostic,” lending to a diverse range of professionals. Can you share some success stories that highlight the impact of these micro loans on individuals from various fields?**

Windmill Microlending has played a pivotal role in the remarkable journeys of diverse professionals, exemplified by Clodia, a Syrian Civil Engineer. Overcoming an arranged marriage

face. We believe that the barriers to professional integration for skilled newcomers can and should be reduced in ways that will benefit both newcomers and Canada and we are happy to provide an informed perspective on the changes that should be made. At the same time, as a registered charity, we are not an advocacy organization, and commenting on what government or other organizations should do is not our prime mandate.

**Can you discuss how the organization strategically allocates funds to maximize the impact on poverty reduction and address specific challenges faced by newcomers?**

We make loans of up to \$15,000 to immigrants and refugees who need funding to restart, change or advance in their careers here in Canada. Most of our funds go to immigrants who need to get reaccredited in a licensed profession, because the costs are so high that many can't afford it. We are growing quickly—by more

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## MANY PEOPLE CAN'T ESCAPE POVERTY BECAUSE THEY LACK ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND, IN MANY CASES, A VERY SMALL AMOUNT CAN HELP SOMEONE CHANGE THEIR TRAJECTORY.

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that interrupted her education, Clodia's pursuit of a Canadian career faced hurdles without local credentials. A Windmill loan facilitated additional courses, propelling her from a lemonade stand job to becoming an Engineer-in-Training and eventually securing managerial roles. Likewise, Dapo, an IT Professional, battled job rejections in Canada after a successful career in Nigeria. A Windmill-supported course renewed his confidence, leading to an internship, a thriving IT consultancy, and a role on Windmill's Board of Directors. Dr. Stephen, a Nigerian Physician, navigated recertification challenges with a Windmill loan for exam fees and now practices in Quesnel, BC. These narratives underscore Windmill's impactful support in empowering professionals across diverse fields to realize their aspirations in the Canadian landscape.

**As a new Canadian myself, I am very interested in Windmill's social cause -- “converting the potential to prosperity” for immigrants and refugees. How does the organization address systemic issues, such as the lack of recognition for foreign credentials and the limited experience in working with immigrant talent, to make a meaningful impact on poverty reduction?**

While our work is providing loans and supports to help our newcomer clients escape poverty and regain their professional status, we are often asked by governments, the media and other thought leaders to comment on the systemic issues our clients

than 60% in the past 12 months—and hope to continue to scale up to meet the need and maximize our impact. We also provide other services to our clients to help them be successful with our loans. These include digital career tools, financial literacy training, career assessment coaching and mentorship so that our clients understand their options, and have the support they need to be successful.

**In your role as the CEO, how do you see Windmill Microlending evolving in the coming years, especially in response to changing immigration patterns and the ongoing challenges faced by newcomers in the Canadian job market?**

Windmill is a continuous learning organization. While continuing our growth to meet the needs of Canada's large population of skilled immigrants, we will also be adapting our model as we take advantage of the new digital tools that are becoming available at an increasing rate. It is our hope that by becoming a leading digital charity, we will be able to serve our clients even more effectively, providing greater customization and speed of service at a lower cost. There may also be an opportunity to consider other underbanked populations, either in Canada or around the world. That theme of converting potential into prosperity motivated me in the founding and building of NEXT Canada, and it is still hugely motivating to me today at Windmill. I'm really proud of the impact that these two innovative organizations are having.

2

ZERO  
HUNGER

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



**JOSH DOMINGUES**



Founder, **Flashfood**



NEXT Founders, **2018**



**Josh's LinkedIn**

## FROM FOOD WASTE TO SUSTAINABILITY: THE FLASHFOOD STORY

**RECENTLY NAMED ONE OF CANADA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL CHANGEMAKERS,** Josh Domingues has been fighting to reduce food waste for years as Founder and CEO of Flashfood. Josh was motivated to address this pressing issue when his sister, working as a caterer, expressed her dismay at witnessing large quantities of perfectly good food being thrown away at an event. This revelation led Josh to ponder the extent of food waste in the broader food industry. If just one event led to that amount of food waste in a few hours, what did that mean for the food industry in general? He embarked on a journey of market research, interviews, and meetings with industry stakeholders, engaging with grocers, event industry workers, and supply chain personnel. What he discovered was alarming; grocery stores alone discarded a staggering 133 million tons of food annually, representing approximately \$37 billion in lost profits.

Josh Domingues saw this as an opportunity to create a solution that not only addressed the issue of food waste but also offered benefits to the grocery industry. That was how, in 2016, Flashfood was born.

Now a million dollar company, Flashfood started out as a 3-person start-up. They had a singular app for both shoppers and grocery partners, which later changed to 2 separate apps and continued to refine their grocery app to ensure it was easy-to-use for the grocery store employees. As Josh and his team continued to reform and improve Flashfood, they got closer to achieving their goals.

By 2022, Flashfood had already rescued over \$28 million pounds of food from ending up in landfills, marking significant progress in addressing food waste and promoting sustainable agriculture, a key component of the United States' second goal, "Zero Hunger." This initiative not only contributes to ending hunger by preventing the unnecessary disposal of edible food but also aids in achieving food security and improved nutrition by redistributing surplus food to those in need at affordable prices. Josh Domingues' efforts with Flashfood serve as a powerful example of how innovative solutions can align with global sustainability goals and make a positive impact on our world.

3

# GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Ensure healthy lives  
and promote well-  
being for all at all ages



**YISHEL KHAN**



Founder, DOT,  
**Mind Unlocked**



NEXT AI (Montreal),  
**2019**



**Yishel's LinkedIn**

## THE PURSUIT OF WELLBEING

**YISHEL'S PATH TOWARDS HER VISION** of better mental health and well-being began when she worked with children coping with mental disorders. Witnessing the struggles and the need for effective interventions left a lasting impression on her. However, she felt the need to do something more impactful, to create a solution that could reach a larger number of people and yield better results.

The turning point occurred in a 48-hour hackathon, where Yishel's dedication led to a software application for autistic children, winning awards and generating substantial interest. This experience unveiled an unmet need in mental health, prompting the birth of DOT in 2015.

DOT's mission is rooted in a data-driven approach to mental health. It leverages cutting-edge technology, including brain wave analysis and artificial intelligence, to personalize therapy and support. An integral part of their innovative toolkit is a specially designed headset that can read brainwave activities, enabling DOT's AI-driven platform to provide personalized suggestions for enhancing concentration and focus levels according to an individual's unique requirements.

In 2022, DOT achieved global recognition by winning the Collision Conference's Start-up Pitch Competition. This marked a milestone, attracting clients and investors and exemplifying the alignment with the 3rd UN Sustainable Development Goal of "Good health & wellbeing."

The journey continued with DOT's Crowd Favourite Award at the SheBoot Program in November 2023, opening doors to financial support and investor interest. Collaborating with the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, they are set to conduct a validation study in Q1 2024, a crucial step in enhancing mental health, especially for children.

Yishel's entrepreneurial spirit and technological innovation through DOT showcase progress in addressing diverse mental health needs. Her dedication, backed by advanced technology, moves us closer to a world where good health and well-being are accessible to everyone, regardless of age or background.

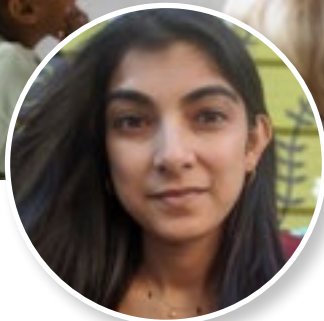
4

# QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



IMAGE BY FREEPIK



**IBTISSAM MUSTAQ**



Founder,  
**Andalusia Speech Therapy Inc.**



NEXT Founders,  
**2021**



**Ibtissam's LinkedIn**

## BRIDGING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

**A SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST BY TRAINING**, Ibtissam's journey to entrepreneurship was driven by a deep-seated belief in the right to effective communication for everyone. What started with just Ibtissam renting a single room to provide private speech therapy on the evenings and weekends after her day job, has now grown to a team of 50 therapists and support staff, 9 physical clinics in Ontario and British Columbia, and online therapy available in every province and territory in Canada and as well as internationally.

Andalusia Speech Therapy is a sanctuary for those seeking to enhance their communication skills and, in doing so, elevate their quality of life. Ibtissam's team of therapists can help with articulation, stuttering, late talking babies, Autism and communication, voice disorders, transgender voice, post stroke rehab, accent modification, public speaking, and more. They collaborate closely with their clients to help them achieve their goals, recognizing that quality education in communication is not one-size-fits-all.

Ibtissam's mission is not confined to providing therapy alone; it extends to advocacy for human rights and equality through the lens of language and communication. She views her company as a social enterprise, and while speech therapy may be the primary focus, Andalusia's services extend beyond helping those with specific needs. They try to raise the voices of those who are not heard, and provide workshops in areas such as Speech Therapy and Indigenous affairs, Anti Racism and communication, Autism and Neurodivergent advocacy.

Ibtissam believes in investing in the people and communities she works with. Her venture provides extensive training for new staff, emphasizing cultural awareness, anti-racism, and human rights. This commitment to inclusivity and equity is a key differentiator, reflecting Andalusia's dedication to providing quality education in the realm of communication.

Ibtissam's story and Andalusia Speech Therapy directly align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of providing Quality Education to all. Ibtissam's work in providing access to speech therapy services that respect diverse backgrounds, advocating for human rights, expanding to serve more communities, and prioritizing cultural awareness demonstrates a tangible commitment to achieving this global objective. Through Andalusia Speech Therapy, Ibtissam is not only bridging communication barriers but also nurturing an environment where quality education is accessible to all, regardless of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable world.

5

GENDER  
EQUALITYAchieve gender  
equality and empower  
all women and girls

IMAGE BY FREERIK



TRICIA JOSE

Founder,  
**We Represent**Next 36,  
**2017**

Tricia's LinkedIn

REWRITING **NARRATIVES**

**IN THE EVER-EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF TECHNOLOGY** and innovation, a visionary team is on a mission to reshape the narrative and break down barriers. Tricia Jose, an alumna of NEXT Canada, has partnered with her co-founder, Sonia Sidhu, to establish We Represent, a company with a vision that transcends gender, race, and background. The essence of We Represent's mission is encapsulated in a powerful statement: "if you can see it, you can be it."

The belief that representation matters forms the bedrock of We Represent's philosophy. Tricia and her team understand that seeing someone who looks like you unveils a realm of possibilities. This fundamental truth propels their efforts to foster an environment where aspiring leaders, regardless of their gender, race, or background, can envision themselves succeeding in any industry.

Tricia reflects on her own journey, unraveling the unconscious gender bias that prevails in the tech industry and many others. She acknowledges the disparity in visibility, with a multitude of male figures celebrated and recognized while their female counterparts remain in the shadows. The recognition of this gap in representation is a critical step in dismantling the barriers that hinder the progress of women in various fields.

The story takes a personal turn as Tricia shares her experiences, once being proud of being among the few women in her computer science classes. She challenges the distorted perception that positions engineering and technology as male-dominated realms and emphasizes the need for a shift in mindset.


In essence, Tricia's journey and the mission of We Represent align seamlessly with the United Nations' fifth sustainable development goal: Gender Equality. By empowering young minds, rewriting narratives, and championing representation, We Represent contributes significantly to the broader global effort of achieving gender equality. Tricia's story exemplifies the transformative power of visibility and serves as a beacon of inspiration for future generations, aligning perfectly with the ethos of the UN's mission to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



The view pairs best with  
a coffee or cocktail.  
Coming soon.



# LEADING CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

With over 25 years of expertise in environmental science, corporate sustainability, and responsible finance, **SANDRA ODENDAHL** is a seasoned leader in the dynamic world of corporate sustainability. Currently serving as Senior Vice President and Head of Sustainability, Diversity & Partnerships at BDC, she is also a board member at NEXT Canada and Chair of the HR and Culture Committee. In our conversation, Sandra shares insights on sustainable practices in finance and banking, highlighting BDC's role in driving positive change. 

# SANDRA'S

extensive journey in sustainability began in 2000, leading one of Bay Street's pioneering environmental risk management teams. This marked just the initiation of her remarkable and enduring career. Currently, at BDC, she is at the forefront, driving the efforts to streamline corporate sustainability and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices. She has played a pivotal role in developing a sustainability strategy within a tight timeframe at BDC. Engaging a diverse group of individuals across the organization, her team successfully laid the groundwork for more efficient sustainability initiatives, including BDC's first-ever sustainability report and enterprise-wide sustainability training.

Discussing BDC, Sandra underscored the significance of diversity, equity, and inclusion as integral pillars of the company's sustainability strategy. "We recognize that not everyone starts at the same place. There are systemic barriers, there's inequality, there are biases, there are all sorts of things that pose hurdles. And so ensuring that no one is left behind is the goal of the social pillar of our

sustainability strategy" she said. BDC's commitment to DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) in its own workplace also translates into tangible benefits, reflected in below-average turnover rates and high employee engagement scores.

Internally, BDC has instituted a robust DEI talent strategy overseen by HR, complete with action plans, targets, and programs, she explained. This internal commitment has resulted in gender parity within the workforce since 2018, with 40% of leadership roles held by women. Externally, BDC has implemented a client diversity strategy with the aim of enriching the representation of diverse entrepreneurs in its portfolio and the broader Canadian business landscape. Furthermore, BDC extends support to SMEs by providing a DEI toolkit and offering practical advice and tools for businesses to seamlessly incorporate sustainability practices into their operations.

Sustainability is not just a checkbox but ingrained in BDC's core purpose as a development bank. Their significant investments in climate and clean tech, with a billion dollars committed through its funds, highlight their mandate to move towards a sustainable future. This investment attracts additional private sector funding, fostering innovation in environmental technologies. Sandra talked about companies that BDC has helped in





PHOTO BY ENG C. LAU

**SUSTAINABILITY IS NOT JUST A CHECKBOX BUT INGRAINED IN BDC'S CORE PURPOSE AS A DEVELOPMENT BANK. THEIR SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS IN CLIMATE AND CLEAN TECH, WITH A BILLION DOLLARS COMMITTED THROUGH ITS FUNDS, HIGHLIGHT THEIR MANDATE TO MOVE TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.**

becoming more sustainable and as a result made more profitable. Examples such as DeeBee's Organics and Zorah Biocosmetiques, showcase how sustainability initiatives contribute to business growth and environmental impact reduction. Where DeeBee's Organics secured business with large retailers like Walmart and Costco, and have seen 100% annual sales growth since they were founded, Zorah Biocosmetiques has had a 30% to 50% reduction in travel time and cost for their employees, all the while reducing their carbon footprint.

Acknowledging the growing importance of sustainability in attracting talent, Sandra also discussed BDC's guide titled "Hire and Retain the Best Employees." This guide offers practical advice on becoming an employer of choice. Additionally, BDC's DEI toolkit provides templates for workplace policies and procedures, making it easier for businesses, especially smaller ones, to implement best practices.

As consumers increasingly prioritize sustainable products, BDC plays a pivotal role in advising businesses on aligning practices with these expectations. Sandra highlighted BDC's monthly B Corp webinars, providing guidance to companies on their sustainability journey. Additionally, the organization offers a wealth of online resources, including a Climate Action Centre, helping SMEs

understand and address their carbon footprint. "We have a lot of touch points with hundreds of companies across the country, many of whom are BDC clients and we support them on their sustainability journey," she said.

Deliberately mapping BDC's framework around four pillars—the workforce, workplace, marketplace, and community—demonstrates a commitment to considering the diverse needs of stakeholders. Sandra emphasized that this approach is baked into the strategy, ensuring that sustainability efforts benefit employees, clients, and the broader community.

Sandra Odendahl's leadership at BDC exemplifies the transformative power of sustainability in driving positive change within an organization and the broader business landscape. Through a structured approach, collaborative efforts, and a commitment to inclusivity, BDC is not only meeting current sustainability challenges but also paving the way for a more sustainable and equitable future.



IMAGE BY FREEPIK




6

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



DAVID LYNCH

-  Co-founder, **Klir**
-  NEXT Founders, **2019**
-  **David's LinkedIn**

## MAKE WAY FOR KLIR TECH

**DAVID LYNCH, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER OF KLIR**, started his career building regulatory and compliance systems for water utilities and regulators in Europe. Recognizing universal challenges in water management, such as climate change impacts and emerging contaminants, David observed that professionals spent over 60% of their time on administrative tasks rather than collaborative improvement. To address this, David and his team developed a proprietary methodology, creating a unified enterprise platform for water management. After extensive validation and growth with regulators and utilities in Europe they identified significant market opportunity in North America and began with securing the most innovative water utility, Southern Nevada Water Authority as their first customer.

This success spurred Klir to scale a solution that transcended borders and would be beneficial to utilities and water managers on a global scale. Following their triumph in Nevada, David relocated to North America, becoming a NEXT Founder at NEXT Canada in 2019. Subsequently, Klir established its international sales office in downtown Toronto.

At its core, Klir is an advanced water management software tailored for water utilities. Its cloud-based platform on Microsoft Azure consolidates and analyzes regulatory data, providing a user-friendly interface for holistic views of water quality, compliance, and system performance. With features like sample monitoring, permit management, and task tracking, Klir streamlines processes and enables informed decision-making. In 2023, Klir introduced Boots, an AI co-pilot powered by ChatGPT4, accelerating real-time monitoring and automating tasks. Trusted globally, Klir ensures 100% compliance for water utilities, currently serving 80 million people across Canada, the USA, and Australia.

Aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal of Clean Water & Sanitation, Klir goes beyond data collection, actively assisting water utilities with the automation of corrective actions and the implementation of strategies for preventative risk management and investment planning further underscore Klir's commitment to sustainable water and sanitation practices, ensuring the protection of the environment on a global scale.

7

# AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Ensure access to  
affordable, reliable,  
sustainable and  
modern energy for all



**NATALIA MYKHAYLOVA**



Founder,  
**WeavAir**



Next 36,  
**2017**



**Natalia's LinkedIn**

## BREATHING INNOVATION

**IN 2017, NATALIA MYKHAYLOVA**, founder and CEO of WeavAir and NEXT Canada Alumna, embarked on a mission to revolutionize air distribution systems, introducing a proactive software and hardware solution with far-reaching implications for health and sustainability. As part of her Ph.D. fieldwork, Mykhaylova observed a growing interest in monitoring and controlling air quality for health improvement. Identifying an opportunity to expand the scope beyond health, she set out to develop technology that could simultaneously enhance air quality, save energy, decarbonize operations, and reduce maintenance costs.

WeavAir's innovative solution relies on a combination of satellite data, advanced IoT sensors, and predictive software to optimize Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investments and operational assets. The company's unique selling proposition lies in its real-time data source and collection methodology, incorporating satellite imaging with proprietary access to NASA imagery.

The impact of WeavAir's technology extends beyond borders. Operating in Canada, South Korea, Singapore, and Poland, the company has garnered recognition through over 20 awards. The technology's ability to accurately track 20 metrics in real-time, coupled with its rapid diagnosis and prevention of air hazards, positions WeavAir as a leader in the market, claiming to be 200 times faster than comparable solutions.

WeavAir's predictive software, based on algorithms detecting, diagnosing, and predicting issues before they escalate, facilitates the creation of autonomous HVAC systems. This not only contributes to improved air quality but also enables fast and accurate decision-making within companies.

As the company continues to grow nationally and globally, with plans to expand into the UAE in 2023, WeavAir exemplifies a holistic approach to sustainability. By addressing health concerns, improving energy efficiency, and contributing to the reduction of carbon emissions, WeavAir aligns seamlessly with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal of Affordable and Clean Energy, ensuring access to sustainable energy for all.



8

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



**MIKE MURCHISON**

- Co-founder, **Ada**
- Next 36, **2012**
- Mike's LinkedIn**

## REVOLUTIONIZING WORKFORCE DYNAMICS

**IN THE DYNAMIC REALM OF CUSTOMER SERVICE**, Ada has emerged as a pioneering force, reshaping the landscape with its innovative AI-powered customer service automation platform. At the helm of this transformative journey is Mike Murchison, the CEO and co-founder of Ada and NEXT Canada Alumnus, whose vision has propelled the company into the forefront of the customer service automation sector.

Before Ada's inception, Murchison grappled with the daunting task of manually handling tens of thousands of customer service inquiries at Volley, an online community platform, the venture he founded prior to Ada. As the platform gained traction, the demand for prompt responses outpaced their ability to keep up. Seeking a solution, Murchison explored existing software options, only to find none that adequately addressed the escalating customer service challenges.

The turning point came when conversations with fellow business owners revealed a common struggle. They, too, were grappling with the inability to respond promptly to customer queries. This realization marked the birth of Ada Support Inc., a company named in homage to Ada Lovelace, the mathematician credited with writing the first computer program in the 1840s.

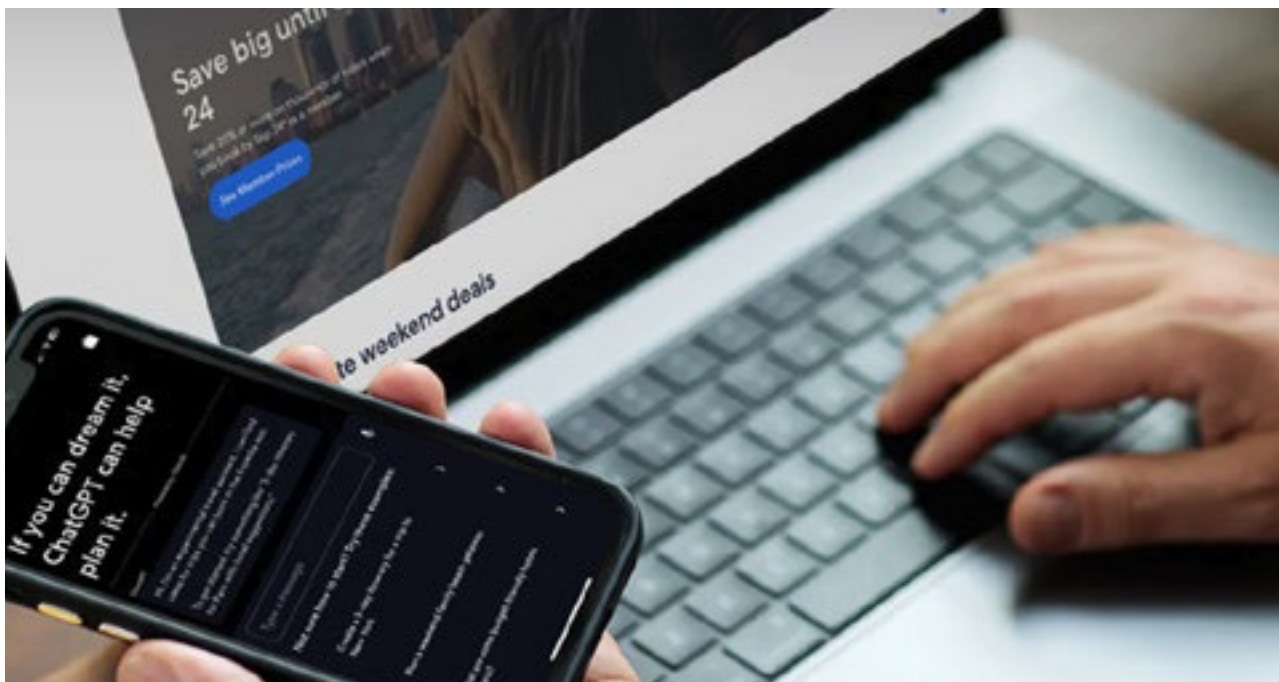
Ada set out to address a fundamental problem: customers wanted to engage with businesses, but the cost of providing quality customer service was a significant barrier. To understand the intricacies of the issue, Murchison and his co-founder, David Hariri, immersed themselves in the daily operations of rapidly growing internet companies, assuming the roles of customer service representatives.

The firsthand experience yielded valuable insights. They discovered that a substantial portion of customer queries was simple, repetitive, and mundane. Moreover, the customer service representatives were dissatisfied with the quality of the existing software tools at their disposal. The desire to provide live chat and messaging support was evident, but the financial constraints prevented businesses from offering these services at scale.

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## ADA'S PLATFORM EMPOWERS INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR IT SKILLS, TO BUILD AND MANAGE AI CHATBOTS CAPABLE OF ADDRESSING OVER 70% OF INQUIRIES WITH PERSONALIZED CONTENT, SPANNING MORE THAN 100 LANGUAGES

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In response to this conundrum, Ada embarked on extensive research to deepen their understanding and find a viable solution. By responding to customer queries at the highest level, Ada's team saw a notable increase in customer loyalty and satisfaction. The realization that technology could enhance these interactions fueled the development of a solution that would later become Ada's customer service automation platform.

Ada's approach involved leveraging machine learning, a form of AI technology, to automate the manual processes they had perfected. The initial trial at one of the companies they worked with yielded promising results. The software's responses were indistinguishable from manual responses, marking a pivotal moment in Ada's journey.

Ada today has evolved into the leading provider of AI-powered customer support chatbots, handling millions of chat-based conversations monthly for renowned clients such as Canva, Mailchimp, and Verizon. Ada's platform empowers individuals, regardless of their IT skills, to build and manage AI chatbots capable of addressing over 70% of inquiries with personalized content, spanning more than one hundred languages.

For Murchison, the mission goes beyond providing a technological solution. He envisions artificial intelligence as a transformative force on par with the impact of the internet in 1995. Ada's commitment to aiding this societal transition led to a strategic collaboration with OpenAI and the development of a new product suite – the Ada AI Agent powered by generative AI.

As Ada continues to make strides in the AI-first customer service sector, Murchison foresees a future where AI becomes indispensable to companies.

In a rapidly expanding AI landscape, Ada stands as a testament to the transformative power of technology, bridging the gap between businesses and customers while redefining the standards of customer service. As Ada pursues its vision of becoming a generational Canadian company, the journey toward potential IPO and continued innovation beckons, signaling a promising future for the intersection of AI and customer experience.

The company's innovative strides in the AI-powered customer service sector align seamlessly with the United Nations' sustainable development goal of 'Decent Work & Economic Growth.' By automating and streamlining customer interactions through their automated customer service platform, Ada contributes to sustained and inclusive economic growth. The company's solutions not only optimize operational efficiency for businesses but also create opportunities for full and productive employment. As Ada's platform empowers non-technical support teams to build, manage, and track automated customer experiences, it fosters an environment where human skills are augmented by technology, enhancing job roles and ensuring meaningful employment. In essence, Ada's commitment to revolutionizing customer service resonates with the broader mission of promoting decent work, economic growth, and fostering a balanced, sustainable economic ecosystem for all stakeholders involved.



# A **NEXT** GENERATION OF ENTREPRENEURS TAKE FLIGHT



(L-R) Anthony Azrak (QC), Aditi Sitolay (BC), Katya Chang (AL), Jovan Phull (NS), Khushi Mittal (AL),  
Edwin Zhou (QC), Vanessa Lo (BC), Jaiya Varshney (BC) & Ishan Arora (AL)

**These are some of the entrepreneurs  
who are joining the NEXT 36  
program with the support of our  
friends at Air Canada**







# FLYING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

**AS CANADA'S LARGEST AIRLINE** and a leader in the aviation industry, Air Canada is working hard to travel even faster towards a goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

To further reduce our environmental footprint, we became the first Canadian airline to join the Aviation Climate Taskforce. Together with nine other global airlines, we're focused on investing in emerging decarbonization

technologies, including the development of sustainable aviation fuels.

Additionally, Air Canada proudly partnered with CHOOOSE to provide customers with verified carbon offsets, and in 2022, we announced a purchase agreement for 30 ES-30 electric-hybrid aircraft. To learn more about our ongoing environmental initiatives, please visit [aircanada.com](https://aircanada.com) here.

9

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



IMAGE BY FRIMFILMS



ZAK LEFEVRE



Co-founder, **ChargeLab**



Next 36, **2015**



Zak's **LinkedIn**

## RE-CHARGING SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

**FOUNDED BY ZAK LEFEVRE**, entrepreneur and alumnus of NEXT Canada, ChargeLab is dedicated to providing cutting-edge solutions for the electric vehicle (EV) industry. Zak's journey into the world of electric cars and sustainable technology began several years ago, at a time when EVs were not as prevalent as they are today. His fascination with electric vehicles led him to attend electric vehicle meetups in his city, where he connected with like-minded individuals passionate about the future of transportation.

These meetups played a pivotal role in shaping Zak's vision for the future. While electric vehicles were gaining traction, he recognized the critical role that infrastructure played in their widespread adoption. This realization led to the creation of ChargeLab in 2015, a pioneering force in the EV Charging industry, offering OCPP-compliant software for managing EV charging stations.

One of the core problems Zak identified, as he was building on the idea, was the lack of standardization in the EV charging ecosystem. With different charger and vehicle manufacturers using varying standards and software, it created a challenging landscape for drivers, businesses, governments, and families looking to install charging stations. ChargeLab has taken up the mantle of addressing this issue by developing universalizable software. This innovation allows drivers to use a single platform across a diverse range of charging hardware, simplifying the process and making it easier for EV owners to find suitable charging options.

In Zak Lefevre's own words, ChargeLab is the "Android of EV charging." Their platform works seamlessly with over 50 different chargers from more than a dozen top equipment manufacturers and is compatible with all electric vehicles on the road today.

ChargeLab exemplifies the essence of the sustainable development goal of 'Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure'. Their commitment to making EV charging more efficient and accessible is a significant step towards a more environmentally friendly future. As Zak rightly points out, profitable and environmentally responsible initiatives are key to changing the world for the better, and ChargeLab is leading the way.

10

REDUCED  
INEQUALITIESReduce inequality  
within and among  
countries

PHOTO BY PIXABAY

ADELE SALIN-CANTEGREL &  
FABRICE CANTEGRELCo-founders,  
**SCIKOOP**Next AI,  
**2023**Adele's LinkedIn &  
Fabrice's LinkedInIMPACT THROUGH  
INCLUSION

**SCIKOOP, FOUNDED BY THE DYNAMIC DUO** Adele and Fabrice, emerges as a beacon of change, dedicated to fostering socially responsible innovations. Adele and Fabrice have translated their commitment to inclusivity into the very fabric of SCIKOOP, aligning it with the 10th United Nations Sustainable Development Goal.

The mission of SCIKOOP is clear: transform research into a collaborative and inclusive endeavor for lasting impact. It showcases how impactful initiatives can emerge from educational foundations dedicated to nurturing innovation and inclusivity.

At the core of SCIKOOP's offerings is a suite of services designed to forge strong connections between researchers and communities. From needs assessment to diversity oversight, matching researchers with communities, and providing advanced collaboration tools, it's a catalyst for positive transformation. The founders' vision permeates through the commitment to confidentiality and security, ensuring an environment where every voice is heard, every perspective is included. Adele and Fabrice emphasize holistic inclusion that encompasses all aspects of research and innovation. Inclusive evaluation, customized strategies, and comprehensive support ensure that every project embraces a diverse range of perspectives, guided by the founders' unwavering commitment to reducing inequalities within and among countries.

Central to SCIKOOP's inclusive approach is the OPAIR platform, a revolutionary shift in research methodology. It serves as more than just a tool – it's a space that bridges researchers, innovators, and communities, creating an environment for genuinely inclusive discoveries. OPAIR, with its features facilitating collaboration through participant recruitment tools, diversity and inclusion guidance, bias mitigation strategies, and community collaboration support, reflects Adele and Fabrice's vision for a more inclusive research landscape. Importantly, OPAIR is not confined to specific fields of study; it is designed to support researchers across various disciplines and contexts.

In this interconnected world, SCIKOOP, guided by its visionary founders, stands as a testament to the transformative power of research when fueled by principles of equality and inclusion.



# Q&A CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADERSHIP VOLUNTEERS

## TIM PRICE

**THE CHAIRMAN OF BROOKFIELD FUNDS** at Brookfield Asset Management Inc., stands as a stalwart advocate for NEXT Canada. His steadfast support has played a pivotal role in fostering a robust alumni network, creating a sense of support that resonates throughout the community of entrepreneurs united in their pursuit of enhancing Canadian prosperity. Tim also serves on the Board of NEXT Canada.

As we sat down with him for an interview, we gained insights from Tim Price's wealth of experience and perspective, exploring the pivotal role he plays in shaping the landscape of entrepreneurship and innovation in Canada.

**You've been a long time supporter of NEXT Canada, and one of our most engaged leadership volunteers. With all the things you could do with your time, why do you focus so much of your energy on NEXT Canada?**

I focus on NEXT because of its exciting potential of creating businesses through training aspiring entrepreneurs. I'm very conscious that the governments in Canada have not been providing nearly enough incentive to create private sector growth to grow our GDP and increase productivity in Canada.

**A few years ago you made waves with the largest individual gift to NEXT Canada, and you chose to direct it to support alumni engagement. Why did you choose this particular angle, and has it proven to be a good strategic donation?**

Fantastic results!! Alumni are key mentors for the later cohorts going through NEXT. They are the folks who will want this to succeed perpetually and help grow/adjust it as necessary into the future.

**In this issue, we are exploring many perspectives on sustainability. To what degree does a venture's awareness of, and commitment to sustainability affect your likelihood of becoming involved as an investor?**

It's important for successful entrepreneurs to understand

the environment they work in and optimize their results in accordance with it. I would expect all products/services provided by NEXT participants to be sustainable.

**At what point in a founder's journey should they be considering volunteerism or charity work? How did you work that into a very busy career at Brookfield Asset Management?**

When founders become successful – when they feel confident in the growth and stability of their wealth and are passionate about volunteering then they can start; mid-50's to early 60's is a reasonable age to begin. Many will wish to start sooner which is commendable, however, the community should not expect commitment from individuals until they have realized success and stability.

**You and your wife Francis both lead very busy lives, and I wonder how you recharge – in order to keep up with your numerous causes. What's a perfect day in the Price household?**

Early workouts, good breakfast then split for the day – I head for the office, Fran works from home. The day is spent relating to our respective causes and investments – then frequently theater or concert in the evening. Music and theater give us great – maybe 3 times a week – pleasure and then home by 10:00 pm.

## 11

SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



IMAGE BY FREEPIK



MAAYAN ZIV



Founder,  
**AccessNow**



Next 36,  
**2016**



**Maayan's LinkedIn**

## ACHIEVING ACCESS TO A BARRIER-FREE WORLD

**IN THE BUSTLING WORLD OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP**, where innovation often stems from personal challenges, Maayan Ziv stands out as a visionary force for inclusivity. As part of the NEXT 36 programs in 2015, Maayan launched AccessNow, the application that has become a powerful tool for individuals with disabilities seeking reliable information about accessible spaces. Maayan has always been vocal about her journey, challenges, and insights on inclusivity, all of which sheds light on the transformative potential of AccessNow.

AccessNow was born out of Maayan's frustration with the lack of accessible space information. As a wheelchair user, she often encountered businesses claiming to be wheelchair accessible, only to find herself without access upon arrival. In response, she initiated the development of AccessNow, an application that harnesses crowdsourcing to collect and share the accessibility status of various locations, including restaurants, hotels, office buildings, public spaces, and tourist attractions. Users can search for a location's accessibility level or contribute information about new places, creating a dynamic and evolving database.

Through AccessNow, Maayan is not merely opening physical doors; she's changing the conversation about what accessibility means for everyone. The application has grown beyond its initial focus on building an online community. It collaborates with Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) to promote the accessibility of entire destinations and spaces, catering to personal, leisure, and business travel perspectives.

Maayan Ziv challenges the conventional notions about accessibility. She emphasizes that accessibility is a journey, not a destination, and extends beyond mere compliance with regulations like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The focus should be on the user experience, ensuring that people with diverse needs feel a sense of belonging.

She believes in highlighting the need to unlearn traditional approaches and

# ACCESSNOW DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTES TO THIS GOAL BY MAKING SPACES MORE INCLUSIVE, SAFE, AND ACCESSIBLE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, FOSTERING A RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN ENVIRONMENT.

embrace innovation for inclusivity. Accessibility goes beyond physical barriers; it involves examining language in communication, programming, and marketing materials. For instance, to make events more accessible, planners can take simple yet impactful measures, such as including an accessibility desk and sharing information in advance about services like sign-language interpreters and gender-neutral washrooms.

Maayan Ziv takes her commitment to inclusivity beyond AccessNow. She highlights three essential components: technology, jobs, and culture, in the startup culture, the importance of coding products in an accessible way, considering diverse perspectives when building teams, and embedding inclusivity into a company's DNA.

Maayan's journey, from creating AccessNow to advocating for inclusivity in the business world, aligns seamlessly with the United Nations' 11th Sustainable Development Goal: Sustainable Cities and Communities. The goal is to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. AccessNow directly contributes to this goal by making spaces more inclusive, safe, and accessible for individuals with disabilities, fostering a resilient and sustainable urban environment.

Maayan Ziv exemplifies how innovation and entrepreneurship can drive positive social change. AccessNow not only provides a solution to a personal challenge but also addresses a broader societal need for inclusivity and accessibility. In a world where more than 20% of the population (and growing; 27% in Canada) is affected by disability, the impact of initiatives like AccessNow goes beyond individual experiences, creating a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.



12

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



IMAGE BY FRIMFILMS



MYRA ARSHAD



Co-founder, **ALT TEX**



Next 36, **2020**



**Myra's LinkedIn**

## DISRUPTING FASHION THROUGH TEXTILES

**IN A WORLD GRAPPLING WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL** impact of the \$2.5 trillion fashion industry, Myra Arshad emerges as a beacon of change. As the Co-founder and CEO of ALT TEX, a biomaterials startup, Myra is on a mission to disrupt the unsustainable practices that have plagued the textile industry for far too long.

ALT TEX focuses on creating circular, biodegradable, and carbon-neutral textiles using food waste as a raw material. This innovative biomaterial, with its patent-pending technology, re-engineers sugars from landfill-bound food waste into high-performance textiles, aiming to replace the environmentally harmful polyester dominating the industry.

The urgency for such disruptive solutions is evident as the fashion industry is responsible for 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Myra's ALT TEX not only addresses this environmental crisis but also contributes to achieving the 12th UN sustainability goal of responsible consumption and production. By diverting 1kg of food waste from landfills, reducing carbon emissions by up to 9kg, and preventing 4g of microplastics from reaching the oceans for every shirt produced, ALT TEX aligns with the principles of sustainable consumption and production patterns outlined by the UN.

Myra's commitment to sustainability extends beyond her business endeavors. As an alumnus of NEXT Canada, she represents a generation of entrepreneurs dedicated to reshaping industries for a more sustainable future. Her journey exemplifies the fusion of business acumen with a deep sense of environmental responsibility.

As ALT TEX moves towards global expansion with a focus on scaling its food-to-fabric innovation, Myra Arshad stands as a testament to the transformative power of entrepreneurship in driving sustainable change. Her efforts not only challenge the norms of the fashion industry but also contribute significantly to realizing the vision of responsible consumption and production outlined by the United Nations. In a world desperately in need of sustainable alternatives, Myra Arshad and ALT TEX represent a hopeful step towards a more environmentally conscious future.





## Solving the world's toughest challenges

Our experts draw on over six decades of deep industry knowledge and experience to provide clients with collaborative, cross-sector solutions that are innovative, safe, cost-effective, and sustainable.

To find out more, visit [hatch.com](https://hatch.com)



13

CLIMATE ACTION



KAYLI DALE

-  Co-founder, **Friendlier**
-  Next 36, **2021**
-  **Kayli's LinkedIn**

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

## TOWARDS A FRIENDLIER FUTURE

**FRIENDLIER EMERGED IN 2019 WITH A CLEAR VISION**—to make single-use packaging obsolete. Kayli Dale, alongside co-founder Jacquie Hutchings, leveraged their education and passion for technology, sustainability, and entrepreneurship to create a company that is making a tangible impact. Friendlier has, to date, diverted over a million packages from landfills, a remarkable achievement that recently earned Kayli Dale a spot on Forbes 30 Under 30 for Social Impact. This recognition underscores the significance of Friendlier's work in combating climate change and its impacts.

Friendlier's reusable containers, now present in over 200 food service businesses across Ontario, have proven instrumental in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, waste, and water consumption. The company's commitment extends beyond the product itself; their approach aligns seamlessly with the first phase of the federal government's ban on single-use plastics, a crucial step towards achieving zero plastic waste by 2030.

Operating on a deposit-based model, Friendlier ensures the ease and accessibility of reusable packaging. The containers, sanitized and recirculated for up to 100 uses, not only contribute to reducing environmental harm but also eliminate the need for traditional cash transactions. The QR codes on each container allows the company to track the entire lifecycle of their containers, providing valuable insights into the positive environmental impact achieved by their clients.

Friendlier's commitment to sustainability goes beyond its immediate operations. The containers are sourced from an organization dedicated to minimizing energy consumption during the production process.

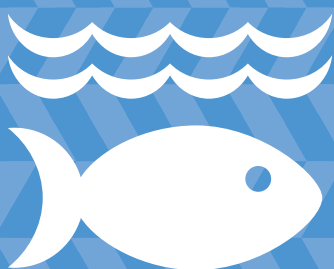
Kayli Dale's journey from Chemical Engineering graduate to Forbes-recognized entrepreneur exemplifies the potential for positive change when passion meets purpose. Friendlier's success not only contributes to the reduction of single-use plastics but also aligns with the urgent call of the 13th UN Sustainable Development Goal—Climate Action. Through their innovative and scalable approach, Friendlier is not just a business; it's a step towards a more sustainable and eco-friendly future.



14

LIFE BELOW  
WATER

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



**THOMAS STORWICK &  
KELLY ZHENG**



Co-founder,  
**Coastal Carbon**



Next 36,  
**2022 & 2017**



**Thomas's LinkedIn &  
Kelly's LinkedIn**

PHOTO BY ISAAC MIJANGOS

## AN OCEAN OF INNOVATION

**THOMAS STORWICK AND KELLY ZHENG**, both NEXT Canada alumni and co-founders of Coastal Carbon, are spearheading a transformative approach to carbon offsetting by turning their focus to the ocean, the world's most significant carbon sink. Traditionally overlooked in nature-based carbon credit initiatives, the ocean's untapped carbon-storing capacity presents a groundbreaking opportunity for natural climate solutions, and Coastal Carbon is at the forefront of this revolution.

In a world where major companies are striving for net-zero greenhouse emissions, Storwick emphasizes the vast potential of the ocean, citing its current inaccessibility for determining carbon credits due to the difficulties in analysis. However, he notes that despite these challenges, there is a wealth of satellite data available—an invaluable resource that Coastal Carbon aims to leverage.

Kelly Zheng further highlights the scarcity of attempts to learn from satellite images and the resultant untapped possibilities. Coastal Carbon is utilizing this plethora of data with artificial intelligence, deploying cutting-edge technology to detect and quantify what lies beneath the ocean's surface. Zheng draws a vivid analogy, describing their approach as akin to "Google Maps but for the ocean."

The focus of Coastal Carbon extends beyond theoretical applications. The company is actively engaged with stakeholders on both the supply and demand sides of the carbon credit market. By working with kelp farmers and companies seeking neutrality, Coastal Carbon is pioneering a technology-driven solution to accurately measure blue carbon credits.

Coastal Carbon is not only advancing scientific understanding but also providing practical and scalable solutions for climate stabilization. In a world where reducing emissions is paramount, their innovative approach to measuring and quantifying underwater carbon sequestration is setting new benchmarks for what's achievable in the fight against climate change, and directly aligns with the 14th UN Sustainable Development Goal, Life below Water.



# DIGITAL SOLUTIONS IN SUSTAINABILITY: A REALISTIC APPROACH IN A GROWING WORLD

In an industry rife with calls for sustainability, it's crucial for the future of mining to move beyond independent perspectives and delve into realistic conversations about the intersection of industry, growth, poverty reduction, and climate change. Alim Somani brings a pragmatic view of the role digital integration will play in sustainable mining practices, emphasizing the need to address macrolevel challenges and opportunities.



**ALIM SOMANI**  
*Managing Director, Digital at HATCH*

**AS THE GLOBAL POPULATION** is anticipated to surge to 9.5 to 11 billion in the coming decades, addressing the escalating energy demand has become a priority. Securing these energy needs is vital for fostering an equitable and secure society, with a crucial emphasis on achieving sustainability through clean energy solutions. The shift from fossil fuels as our primary energy source necessitates a substantial increase of electricity generation capacity, leveraging sources such as solar, wind, and nuclear.

Developing less carbon-intensive methods for producing metals like steel is imperative and building advanced technologies and sustainable supply chains for environmentally conscious mining, processing, and recycling battery materials is critical. While electric vehicles (EVs) contribute to the rising need for electricity, it's noteworthy that the average EV currently demands approximately six

times the mineral input by weight compared to traditional vehicles, excluding steel and aluminum. EV batteries encompass an array of elements including Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel, Manganese, Graphite, Copper, aluminum, Iron, and various rare earths; some estimates suggest that the carbon footprint associated with mineral extraction and processing brings an EV's environmental breakeven point to around 50,000 miles.

Realizing a vision of an equitable and sustainable world in the coming decades requires the establishment of a more extensive and sustainable mining and metals processing industry.

Transforming this vision into reality demands innovation not only in traditional mining, metallurgical, mineral processing, and material engineering fields, but also in material engineering. And the realization of this vision hinges

on digital innovation, leveraging intelligent data use, analytics, and machine learning.

In recent decades, the landscape of many industries, including healthcare, financial services, and retail, has been revolutionized by data and digital technologies. While digital entrepreneurs have gravitated toward these sectors, an equally substantial opportunity awaits in the mining and metals industry. There lies untapped potential for digital innovators to channel their expertise and efforts, steering the industry to create a better world through positive change in four concrete ways:

**1. Digital twins and simulation.** Using digital twins—virtual models of mining operations—engineers and decision-makers can simulate and analyze various aspects of mining and processing. This technology allows for testing different scenarios and operational changes without physical or environmental risks. It enables optimization of processes for reduced energy consumption and minimal environmental impact, and it can also be used for training purposes, reducing the need for on-site training that could disrupt operations.

**2. Smart water management systems.** Digital technologies can greatly enhance water management in mining operations. By using sensors and Internet of Things (IoT) devices, mines can monitor water usage and quality in real-time. Advanced analytics can then be used to optimize water consumption, ensuring efficient use and helping to minimize environmental impact. This is particularly crucial in regions facing water scarcity. Predictive analytics can also be used for anticipating and managing water-related risks, such as contamination or excessive usage.

**3. Tailings storage optimization.** Tailings, the waste material left after ore extraction, pose significant en-

vironmental and safety challenges. Digital technologies can improve tailings management through monitoring and predictive modeling. Sensors can provide real-time data on tailings dam stability, helping to prevent disasters. Machine learning algorithms can analyze historical data to predict potential failures or leaks, allowing for proactive management. Moreover, digital platforms can optimize the design and placement of tailings facilities, reducing the environmental footprint and enhancing safety.

**4. Predictive analytics for resource optimization.** Advanced data analytics can be used to create predictive models that optimize mining operations. This includes precise ore grade forecasting, which can significantly reduce waste and energy consumption. By predicting the quality and quantity of the ore, mining operations can be more targeted and efficient, thereby minimizing the environmental impact.

As an industry leader, Hatch actively encourages and supports entrepreneurs to engage in tackling the world's toughest challenges through digital innovation, fostering a collaborative and impactful approach to sustainability. Hatch has a heritage of entrepreneurship grounded in our technical soul. As we continue to explore ways to drive positive change in navigating the complex landscape of sustainability in mining, it's imperative to consider the multifaceted challenges presented by global growth and climate change. Our integration of digital solutions is in alignment with UN sustainability goals, providing a holistic approach to addressing the pressing issues of our time. As we strive for a more sustainable future, the key lies in realistic conversations, innovative solutions, and a collective commitment to balancing progress with environmental and social responsibility.



PHOTOS BY TOM FISK

15

LIFE ON  
LAND



IMAGE BY PEXELS MAGDA EHLERS



**NUHA SIDDIQUI**



CEO & Co-Founder,  
**erthos**



Next 36,  
**2018**



**Nuha's LinkedIn**

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

## EVOLVING INTO A PLASTIC-FREE FUTURE

**NUHA SIDDIQUI'S JOURNEY FROM A STUDENT** with a passion for environmental economics to a cleantech entrepreneur is a testament to the power of combining purpose with innovation. In the face of alarming projections about plastic pollution, Siddiqui took action, co-founding erthos in 2018 with a mission to reduce the world's reliance on single-use plastics.

What started as a research project at the University of Toronto, focused on finding sustainable alternatives for plastic packaging, evolved into a groundbreaking cleantech company. Siddiqui, along with her co-founders Kritika Tyagi and Chang Dong, developed erthos to create a non-toxic, fully compostable resin from biobased ingredients that could be molded into plastic. The goal was clear: to drive a shift towards plant-powered materials that are not only sustainable but also compatible with existing supply chains.

The urgency of the climate crisis fueled Siddiqui's impatience to make a tangible impact sooner rather than later. This drive led to erthos' innovative approach in embedding sustainability throughout the sourcing and production processes. Their vision goes beyond mere recyclability or biodegradability; erthos aims to set a new standard for sustainable materials, sourcing inputs from biobased ingredients such as agricultural byproducts.

The company's commitment to sustainability earned Nuha Siddiqui and Kritika Tyagi a spot on Forbes' 30 under 30 list in the social impact category.

As erthos continues to make strides in transforming the plastic industry, Siddiqui remains focused on providing a seamless transition to sustainable alternatives. The company's approach involves working directly with manufacturers and integrating within existing supply chains, ensuring a one-for-one replacement without disruption.

In the context of the UN's 15th Sustainable Development Goal, Life on Land, erthos aligns with the objective to protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. By addressing plastic pollution and offering plant-powered alternatives, erthos contributes to halting biodiversity loss and reversing land degradation, connecting their mission to the broader global agenda for a sustainable future.



16

# PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



IMAGE BY FREEPIK



**BENJAMIN ALARIE**



Co-founder,  
**Blue J Legal**



Next Founders,  
**2016**



**Benjamin's LinkedIn**

## MAKING LAW ACCESSIBLE

**BLUE J HAS EMERGED AS A TRAILBLAZER** in the ever-evolving landscape of legal technology, dedicated to bringing absolute clarity to the law through innovative solutions. Co-founded by Benjamin Alarie in 2015, this legal technology company has set itself apart with a mission to empower tax and legal professionals, making their services more transparent and accessible.

Blue J's groundbreaking software utilizes artificial intelligence to predict court outcomes in cases involving tax and employment law. What sets them apart is their impressive 90 percent accuracy rate and the ability to deliver results four times faster than traditional legal research methods.

Under Alarie's guidance, Blue J has cultivated a clientele that includes law firms, accounting firms, corporations, and government bodies across North America. The company's impact is not just theoretical; the federal justice department relies on Blue J's software to predict case outcomes, demonstrating the real-world applicability of their cutting-edge technology.

Alarie's commitment to diversity and inclusivity is reflected in Blue J's Canadian employment law product, which includes modules addressing disabilities, sexual harassment, worker classification, and constructive dismissal. The company's tools guide lawyers through a series of questions, providing predictions of likely outcomes with a confidence level indicated by a percentage.

In alignment with the 16th UN Sustainable Development Goal of Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions, Blue J's contributions to legal technology resonate with the goal's essence. By providing transparent and efficient legal solutions, Blue J contributes to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all, and the building of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Benjamin Alarie's leadership exemplifies the commitment to positive change in the legal landscape, aligning with the United Nations' vision for a sustainable future.

17

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



MEHDI MASOUMI



Co-founder, **Deaf AI**



Next AI, **2022**



**Mehdi's LinkedIn**

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development



## A SIGN OF INCLUSIVITY

**IN A WORLD THAT IS RAPIDLY EVOLVING** with technological advancements, the journey toward inclusivity often leaves behind some of the most marginalized communities. One such community is the deaf and hard-of-hearing population, facing limited options for accessible communication. Sign language services, a lifeline for many, are not always affordable or readily available for grassroots organizations and small businesses. Meanwhile, subtitles, the widely adopted alternative, prove insufficient for some individuals. Deaf AI, an innovative startup, aims to bridge this accessibility gap through its AI-based sign-language interpretation service.

The brainchild of Mehdi Masoumi, Deaf AI seeks to revolutionize the landscape of communication for the deaf community. Masoumi's inspiration stemmed from the media coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic, where human interpreters were deployed in emergency situations. This sparked the idea of extending sign language services beyond emergencies to various aspects of public life.

The demand for sign-language interpreters is on the rise, especially in critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and entertainment. However, the shortage of interpreters and the challenges faced by service providers in acquiring them create barriers to accessibility. Human interpreters often require weeks to book, making real-time communication a distant dream for many.

Deaf AI steps in with an innovative subscription model that provides on-demand sign-language interpretation services. This not only addresses the deficit of interpreters but also offers an affordable and accessible solution for individuals, grassroots businesses,



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## THE VIRTUAL SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETER, DEVELOPED BY DEAF AI, APPEARS ON THE SCREEN'S CORNER, OFFERING REAL-TIME TRANSLATION OF AUDIO – A GROUNDBREAKING STEP TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE ERA OF COMMUNICATION.

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large organizations, and other service providers. The virtual sign-language interpreter, developed by Deaf AI, appears on the screen's corner, offering real-time translation of audio – a groundbreaking step toward a more inclusive era of communication.

More than 400 million people communicate using sign language, yet equitable access to essential services and employment opportunities remains a challenge. Deaf AI's mission is to train machines with artificial intelligence to perform sign language, making the real and virtual worlds more inclusive for this community. Their ultimate vision is to develop digital humans as sign language interpreters, offering real-time interpretation of voice into sign languages.

Deaf AI, by bringing together various industries and communities, strengthens the means of implementation and revitalizes many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Deaf AI significantly contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by enhancing accessibility for the Deaf, Goal 4 (Quality Education) through its educational impact on Deaf culture, Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by fostering inclusivity, and Goals 10 and 11 (Reduced Inequality and Sustainable Cities)

through promoting equal access in public spaces. In essence, it brings together various aspects of sustainable development, ultimately fulfilling the 17th UN Sustainable Development goal of "Partnerships for the goals."

Deaf AI's commitment to improving the lives of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals is evident in its impact on communication access in public spaces. The virtual avatar, translating public announcements and important information into real-time ASL, seeks to reduce social isolation, improve access to information, and facilitate daily activities.

In conclusion, Deaf AI emerges as a beacon of innovation, addressing the long-standing challenges faced by the deaf and hard-of-hearing community in accessing essential services and communication. Mehdi Masoumi's journey from recognizing the gaps in emergency sign-language interpretation to founding Deaf AI showcases the power of visionary entrepreneurship in creating positive social impact. As Deaf AI continues to pioneer advancements in AI-based sign-language interpretation, it aligns with the UN's sustainable development goal, advocating for partnerships that strengthen the means of implementation and create a more sustainable and inclusive future for all.



PHOTO BY FREEPIK

# Is your startup venture as sustainable as your technology?

Value-led sustainability is everybody's  
business. Make it yours.

[ey.com/ca/start-ups](https://ey.com/ca/start-ups)



The better the question.  
The better the answer.  
The better the world works.



Building a better  
working world



IMAGE BY FAUXELS

**JULIA BOLPOIS**

Senior Manager  
Business Tax Services (BTS)

**MARTIN MCLAUGHLIN**

Partner/Principal  
Business Tax Services (BTS)

**DHARMESH GANDHI**

Partner/Principal  
Business Tax Services (BTS)

# THINK HOLISTICALLY ABOUT INCENTIVES TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE GREEN TRANSITION

WITH THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT'S FOCUS ON ACHIEVING NET-ZERO EMISSIONS BY 2050, recent federal and provincial budgets have announced incentives aimed at transitioning Canada to a greener economy. These tax incentives, in conjunction with existing discretionary programs, have created a land-scape that can support businesses at every stage of the business lifecycle.



**What does that mean for entrepreneurs?**

Now's the time to consider the benefits of a holistic approach to incentives planning. A forward-looking and strategic plan will allow companies to stack incentives and increase the benefits, without leaving potentially valuable government funding on the table.

**What kinds of incentives are available in Canada now?**

Incentives can be broken down into two distinct categories:

**1. Investment tax credits (ITCs)** are legislated incentives available to various types of businesses. Since ITCs are legislative in nature rather than competitive, your likelihood of eligibility is greater.

**What does that mean?** If you meet the eligibility criteria, you receive the funding. These incentives vary in size and scope. In some cases they target or offer enhanced tax credits to Canadian-controlled private corporations — for example, the federal Scientific



Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) program or the Ontario Made Manufacturing ITC.

**2. Discretionary incentives** take the form of repayable or forgivable loans and grants. These incentives are competitive in nature, rather than legislative.

**What does that mean?** Entrepreneurs apply for these programs before starting a project, and agencies that administer them have discretion over which companies receive funding. While some programs, such as the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP), have year-long open intakes, others, such as Innovation Solutions Canada's Challenge Stream, have shorter intake windows targeting specific types of technologies.

### **How can entrepreneurs effectively navigate the incentive landscape?**

One of the challenges across both ITCs and discretionary incentives is that often double dipping isn't permitted. That means it's important to identify programs that work symbiotically to cover different expenditures related to your project. Moreover, most programs have stacking limitations, which restrict the maximum legislated and discretionary funding contributions businesses can receive from various levels of government.

### **What does that look like in practice?**

Consider a company with operations across Canada charting the incentives course from a startup to a scale-up. During the startup phase, the company can take advantage of programs such as IRAP, applying before the project starts. IRAP provides grant funding to develop and advance technologies, which can be layered with tax credit programs like SR&ED. As the company and its products advance to higher technology readiness levels, the business can apply for larger grant or loan programs with more detailed reporting requirements.

The federal government offers programs like these on a continuous basis. Export Development Canada's Investment Matching Program can help companies quickly access capital needed to grow their business and access international markets.

In many cases, provincial governments help, too. For example, there are programs like Québec's Technoclimat and Ecopformance, and periodic intakes such as Emissions Reduction Alberta, through which "clean technology investments help innovators develop and demonstrate Alberta-based technologies that lower emissions and costs."

As that same business continues to grow and its technology moves towards commercialization, investments in eligible equipment used in the manufacture of clean technologies may receive a 30% refundable Clean Technology Manufacturing ITC. Federal and provincial discretionary loan programs such as the zero-interest Business Scale-up and Productivity Program available in Western Canada can help businesses access capital to help with their upfront investment.



Finally, when marketing technologies, the business will want to remember that companies adopting clean technologies like heat pumps may also be eligible for a refundable investment tax credit of up to 30% under the Clean Technology ITC.

Keep in mind: this is just one example of the many pathways through the incentives landscape. It demonstrates the multitude of possibilities available to companies. Above all, it clearly reinforces the importance of broad stakeholder engagement and strategic planning.

Striking that balance is crucial for any entrepreneur looking to create innovations that tackle the green transition Canada is embarking on now.



# UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO: TOPPING THE SUSTAINABILITY CHARTS

**OUR FOUNDING ACADEMIC PARTNER**, the University of Toronto has been recognized as the most sustainable university globally by the QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2024, evaluating post-secondary institutions for their environmental impact, social impact, and governance.

The ranking, released by London-based Quacquarelli Symonds, positioned the university first overall out of more than 1,400 institutions across 95 countries. The University of Toronto performed exceptionally well in two key areas: environmental impact, where it secured the second spot globally, and social impact, where it ranked fourth worldwide.

The University of Toronto's commitment to sustainability is evident in various initiatives across its three campuses. Projects such as achieving climate positivity by 2050, implementing geothermal and solar energy systems, and fostering sustainability in academic programs showcase the institution's dedication to reducing its environmental footprint.

Nearly 30% of all undergraduate courses at the University of Toronto in the 2023-24 academic year have a

sustainability orientation, highlighting the integration of sustainability into the curriculum.

The recognition in the QS sustainability ranking underscores the University of Toronto's commitment to leadership



**JON FRENCH**

*Director, University of Toronto Entrepreneurship at University of Toronto*

The University of Toronto is proud to be recognized as the most sustainable university in the world by the QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2024 – ranking #1 out of more than 1,400 institutions across 95 countries. Our entrepreneurial community is an engine for startups that create both economic and social impact and the principles of the UNSDGs are woven into much of our programming, from initiatives to support under-represented communities to ventures that focus on a healthier planet. The priorities of building a profitable company and one that leaves our world a better place, can no longer be mutually exclusive.

in sustainability and positions it favorably among prospective students who increasingly prioritize an institution's sustainability practices alongside academic excellence. The institution's sustained efforts in sustainability contribute not only to its global standing but also to a positive impact on environmental and social responsibility.

**NEXT**  
CANADA

# RECRUITMENT IS UNDER WAY FOR 2024



“NEXT instilled a level of education and skills I never would have otherwise had access to; and more importantly gave me the confidence to know that I have what it takes to go out there and win – and make a significant contribution to the Canadian economy.”

**CRISTEN PHIPPS**  
FOUNDER, HANDLD

## **NEXTFOUNDERS**

### **NEXT FOUNDERS APPLICATIONS**

If you're a startup founder seeking the essential guidance to scale your venture, Next Founders might just be the ideal program for you and your startup.

**Applications are now live. Don't forget to apply by March 19, 2024!**

To learn more about Next Founders, visit [www.nextcanada.com/next-founders](http://www.nextcanada.com/next-founders)

### **QUESTIONS?**

Email [mischa@nextcanada.com](mailto:mischa@nextcanada.com) for more information

The background features a dark purple gradient with vibrant, glowing audio waveforms in shades of pink and orange. Two white microphone icons are positioned between the words 'WHO'S' and 'LISTENING', and between 'TO' and 'WHAT'.

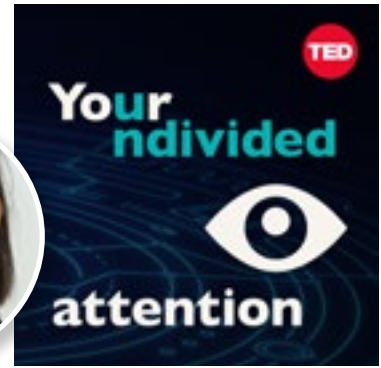
# WHO'S LISTENING TO WHAT

**DISCOVER THE AUDIO PREFERENCES OF  
THE NEXT CANADA TEAM AS THEY SHARE THEIR DAILY  
LISTENING HABITS, SPANNING TOPICS  
FROM AMERICAN POLITICS TO  
TECH REALITIES AND CHALLENGES.**





**MISCHA HAMARA** *Director of Founder Success*  
 I have been listening to **Hard Fork**, a *New York Times* podcast. It is a show about the future that is already here. Each week, journalists Kevin Roose and Casey Newton explore and make sense of the latest in the rapidly changing world of tech.



**JASKARAN CHAUHAN** *Manager of Stewardship & Office of the CEO*  
**Your Undivided Attention** by Tristan Harris and Aza Raskin (The Centre for Humane Tech), talks about some of the most relevant topics in tech. They bring up vital concerns for those who advocate for a careful approach to the use and regulation of technology, and the impact technology has had in the past and the impact it will have in the future.



**FLETCHER MCLAUGHLIN** *Program Coordinator*  
 I would strongly recommend **Lex Fridman's podcast**. Lex has interviewed many of the top minds in a variety of fields. I love the intellectual diversity of his guests. The podcast is also longform (2-3 hours in length), which provides a great opportunity to explore these various subjects in great depth.



**STEPHANIA STEFANAKOU** *Venture Manager*  
**The FemTech Focus Podcast** with Dr. Brittany Barreto is something I listen to to keep up-to-date with the latest tech and clinical findings in women's healthcare. The podcast brings together individuals who support, invest in, and innovate within the FemHealth market. It explores current innovations and discusses the future landscape of female health and wellness.



**JULIE VAN KESSEL** *Director of Finance & Operations*  
 I love **Pod Save America** and **Pod Save the World** by Crooked Media. Crooked Media was started by 4 of Barack Obama's staffers who are witty, charming, insightful and crazy smart. They give a liberal (Democrat) biased view of not only American politics, but how those politics affect the world. I love when you can laugh and learn at the same time.



**ALEXANDRA MCGREGOR** *Chief Program Officer*  
 My favourite right now is **David Senra's 'Founders'**. Senra reads a biography every week and then discusses it, but it's not just modern founders, he covers entrepreneurs from the 19th century on.

# COMMUNITY NEWS

NEXT CANADA COMMUNITY MAKING HEADLINES

**AARON LABBÉ**  
Lucid



**JOSH DOMINGUES**  
Flashfood



**RYAN AUSTIN**  
Cognota



**TYLER & BRADEN HANDLEY**  
Inkbox



**ZAK LEFEVRE**  
ChargeLab



**HUSSEIN FAZAL & HENRY SHI**  
Super



**MICHAEL HELANDER**  
OTI  
Lumionics



**PATRICIA THAINE**  
Private AI



**SHRIYA GUPTA**  
Daily Blends



**THOMAS STORWICK**  
Coastal Carbon



**HEDVIG CHRISTINE ALEXANDER**  
Powered  
by People



**SUMREEN RATTAN & EDWARD CHIANG**  
Moment Energy



# IN

IN THE PAST FISCAL YEAR (SEPTEMBER 2022 – AUGUST 2023), our Alumni have garnered attention for capital raising, team expansion, innovation, and inspiration. Explore their accomplishments by clicking on the headshots below.

You can delve deeper into NEXT Canada and our alumni achievements in our **2023 ANNUAL REPORT**.

**JEAN AMIOUNY**  
Shakepay

**MIKE MURCHISON**  
Ada

**ERAN HENIG**  
Thrivr

**MARIE CHEVIER**  
Sampler

**MALLORIE BRODIE & LAUREN LAKE**  
Bridgit

**BRADEN REAM**  
Voiceflow

**NUHA SUDDIQUI**  
erthos

**KAYLI DALE**  
Friendlier

**DAVID LYNCH**  
Klir

**TAYLOR MANN**  
Cleanslate UV

**JAMES ROCKWOOD**  
CapIntel

**IAN BURGESS**  
Validere

**LAURENT LAFERRIERE & OLIVIER BOURBONNAIS**  
Ditch Labs





## KYLE J. WINTERS

*Chief Executive Officer, NEXT Canada*

**I HAD THE PLEASURE** of attending Venture Day in Montreal this past September. Congratulations to the Montreal team for putting on such a wonderful show. It was great to see the talent on stage presenting ideas and inviting conversations. Here are the ten ventures working in the AI space that I am watching closely.

# AI VENTURES TO WATCH



**ANGE BLECON,  
NYLAN RAUFASTE**

**COMPARASTORE** is an all-in-one platform that automates tasks for self-storage operators. Their unique marketplace optimizes customer acquisition, while their innovative chatbot, Storbot, improves conversion rates, and their user-friendly dashboard simplifies customer management.



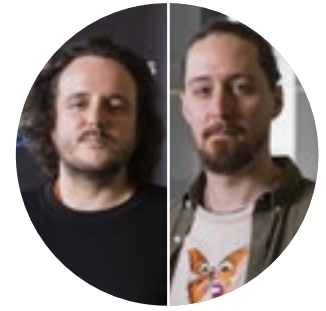
**JERRY CHIEN**

**GRAVVITY** is a 3D version of Shopify with 10X customer conversion potential for online retailers. We empower users to create captivating and engaging AI-generated 3D website shops in minutes with no coding required.



**AHMED HUSSEINI ORABI,  
PEDRO BENTO DE FARIA**

**KELSEN LEGAL TECHNOLOGIES'** generative AI-base writing tool makes it easier and much faster to create quality first drafts of long-form, complex, non-contract legal writing.



**EDOUARD REINACH,  
GABRIEL LESPÉRANCE**

**TRAMPOLINE AI** enables knowledge-intensive businesses to create value faster through optimal knowledge utilization. Their technology makes it possible for users to find the exact content they need on any platform, thereby accelerating information sharing and knowledge discovery, automating update routines and filling knowledge gaps for good.



**DANIYAL LIAQAT,  
SALAAR LIAQAT**

**TABIAT HEALTH's** AI-first remote patient monitoring platform helps doctors and patients better manage chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, the third leading cause of death, globally. Their systems are tailored for the patient journey and clinician workflows, ensuring actionable insights to doctors at the right time.



**AMAN BHANDAL, ISTIAK KHAN,  
SALVATORE TEDONE**

**CRANBERRY PAYMENTS** protects a merchant's payments by using AI to automate chargeback claims with the merchant. They reduce cost and time spent on chargeback claims while providing a higher chance of winning lost revenue than existing solutions on the market.



**AMY LORINCZ,  
MARTIN TURCOTTE**

**VOPE MEDICAL** has developed an AI-driven software to address a significant unmet need for clear vision in minimally invasive surgery. They are optimizing and fully automating the cleaning process to reduce errors and frustrations, allowing surgeons to stay completely focused on the procedures they are performing and improve patient outcome.



**CEDRIC ROBERT,  
KEVIN GENTIL-CANTIN**

**ALTER** is a business-to-enterprise, physical climate risk DaaS software focused on sectors relying heavily on real assets. They leverage AI to decode, analyse and map financially material relationships between real assets and their surroundings.



**MOHAMMED BUTTU,  
NOAH CRAMPTON, SERENA JEEBLEE**

**MUTUO HEALTH Solutions'** AI-powered solution, Auto-Scribe, analyzes patient-provider conversations in real time, generating accurate medical notes and saving providers up to 50% of their administrative work time.



**EMMANUEL AKINDELE,  
KYLE LACROIX**

**BLUE GUARDIAN** uses AI to monitor for early signs of mental health issues in youth by analysing social media content.

A woman in a boxing ring, wearing boxing gloves and a headband, is the central figure. The background is a dark, green-tinted digital rain effect, reminiscent of the Matrix movie. The woman has tattoos on her arms and is looking down.

# **GRIT**

# **GAME CHANGERS**

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GRIT ed. 14 celebrates the inherent connection between sports and entrepreneurship, emphasizing how both disciplines share a common ground of determination, teamwork, and a never-ending pursuit of excellence. If you have a sport background or your venture is involved in fitness sport or health, we want to hear from you!

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