

A NEXT CANADA PUBLICATION

GRIT



SEPTEMBER 2023

HOMETOWN

Heroes

God's Pocket Resort – Hurst Island, BC, powered by Moment Energy (NEXT 36, 2020)



GETTING AROUND THUNDER BAY WITH URIDE

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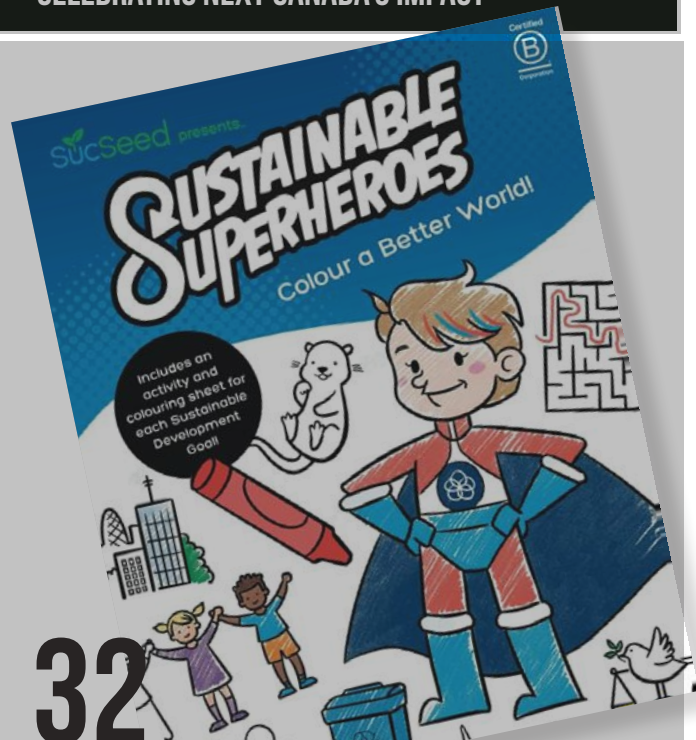
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Cristen Phipps, winner of the W. Galen Weston Top Entrepreneur Award.



I AM

PLEASSED TO INTRODUCE THE FALL

2023 issue of GRIT Magazine, where we celebrate remarkable alumni and others in

our network who embody the spirit of “hometown heroes”.

This edition shines a spotlight on NEXT alumni who, beyond the bustling cityscapes of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, are making significant societal and economic impact in their own communities. Their dedication and resilience serve as a testament to the power of local entrepreneurship and the immense potential it holds for our nation.

This issue takes a slightly different approach to storytelling than we have in the past. Yes, we introduce you to six remarkable alumni whose ventures span the country. But, in “hometown heroes” we’ve reached out to locals who have been affected by our alumni ventures and can speak to the impact that they are having in their communities.

Also in this issue we feature an op-ed by Federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne. The minister was a special guest at a garden party hosted by Reza and his partner Marion Annau to celebrate some of NEXT’s most accomplished alumni.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to my team at NEXT Canada who have delivered an exceptional summer of programming for our 2023 cohorts in Toronto, Montreal and virtually. With the support of our academics, mentors, advisors, investors and special guests we have raised the bar on our program experience, and we expect to raise it even further next year.

As always, your feedback and suggestions are invaluable to us. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time.

Kyle Winters

CEO, NEXT Canada



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NEXT CANADA

At the heart of our alumni success lies our premier programming:

NEXT36

For students and recent grads launching their startups.

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NEXTAI

For AI-enabled ventures looking to disrupt industries.

[LEARN MORE](#)

NEXTFOUNDERS

For founders of high growth ventures looking to scale.

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NEXTALUMNI

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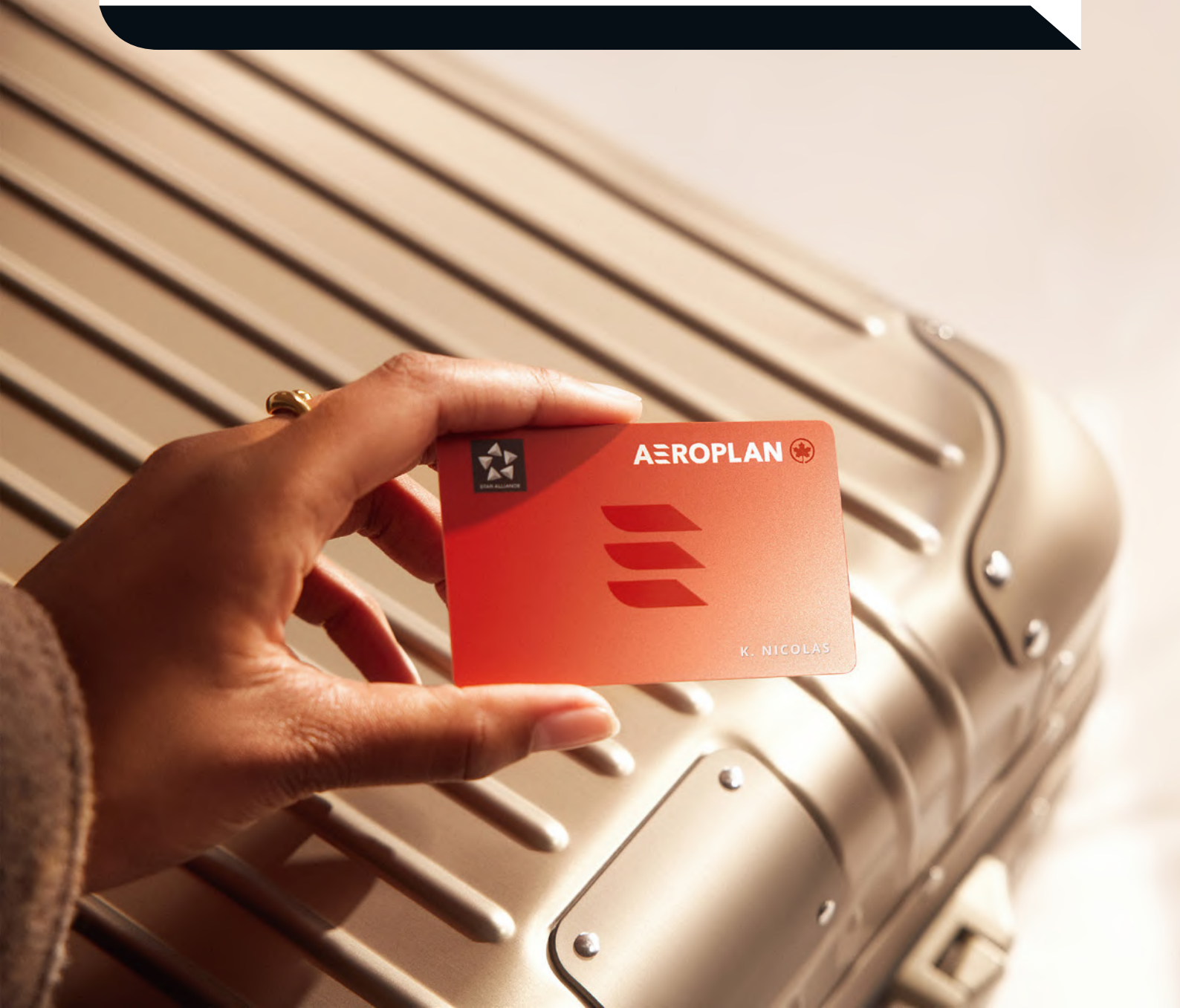
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AEROPLAN 





**g^oIN
GOOD
COMPANY**



Great things happen when you convene the right group of people. Harley Finkelstein (President of Shopify), the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry) and Reza Satchu (NEXT Canada Founding Chairman) enjoy a lively conversation over dinner – during an event that welcomed 65 guests to celebrate the accomplishments of NEXT Canada.



EZA SATCHU and his

partner Marion Annau know how to throw a party. On June 28th they welcomed 65 guests to a garden party at their beautiful Toronto home. Later in the evening the guests sat down to dinner, during which Reza led an open conversation about the impact that NEXT Canada has had on the Canadian economy and society, as well as its plans for the next decade. The guests included some of NEXT's most generous donors, CEOs from Canada's largest companies, and 30 NEXT alumni (who have raised almost \$2.5 billion in equity capital, and have created thousands of jobs).

PHOTO BY FX PRODUCTIONS CANADA INC.



Owen Duckman (Wittington Investments) & host Marion Annau

Minister Champagne, Emilie Cushman (Kira Talent), Reza Satchu (NEXT Founding Chairman), Kyle Winters (NEXT CEO)

Claudia Hepburn (NEXT Co-Founder) & Nancy Lockhart (NEXT Donor)

Michelle Zatlyn (Cloudflare)

IT TRULY HAS BEEN A TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR ME AND FOR EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM AND I OWE SO MUCH THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO MADE THIS PROGRAM POSSIBLE. IT COMPLETELY CHANGED THE TRAJECTORY OF MY LIFE. – LAUREN LAKE, NEXT CANADA ALUMNA

The NEXT alumni were center stage during dinner and shared how their experiences at NEXT Canada were instrumental in shaping their careers. NEXT Board member and alumna, Emilie Cushman, the CEO and Founder of Kira Talent, opened the event and shared a brief glimpse of her entrepreneurial journey. “Joining NEXT a decade ago was the most important inflection point in my life to date. It set me on a new and better trajectory that otherwise might have taken me years to achieve. Through NEXT I acquired the confidence to think bigger, but more importantly, the confidence to commit, to relentlessly pursue an opportunity, taking obstacles and failure as learning but never letting them slow me down.”

Her sentiment was echoed by many alumni throughout the evening, with most elaborating on Reza’s teachings and what they took away from his classes. NEXT alumni Mike Muchison, the CEO and Founder of Ada, and Lauren Lake, Co-Founder of Bridgit, offered a toast to the Satchus and some reflections as graduates from the earliest years of the program. Lauren noted, “It truly was a transformational experience for me and for everyone in this room and I owe so much thanks to all those who made this program possible. It completely changed the trajectory of my life”. In response, Mike focused on the importance of continuously raising the bar individually and as a country – something he learned from Reza and believes to be one of the main instruments in closing the GDP gap between Canada and

the United States.

Special guest speakers included both Harley Finkelstein, President, Shopify, and Michelle Zatlyn, President, Cloudflare, who spoke about a new NEXT Canada program they are co-leading – NEXT IPO. The NEXT IPO is a boutique program that is supporting high growth ventures that aspire to go public within the next few years. Through a curated series of closed door sessions – Harley, Michelle, Reza are supporting five alumni ventures in navigating their IPO journey.

“Commitment really leads to magic,” said Reza, to the group of inspired guests, reiterating the importance of devotion to a cause, to a company and to a culture of growth and exponential learning. “The privilege of being a founder is the privilege of being able to make a positive impact on the lives of others and having an opportunity to give back to the community”

Minister Champagne who initially agreed to attend only the garden party reception chose to remain for the entire evening – and closed the event by highlighting the importance of supporting entrepreneurs working in Canada, bringing in diverse talent and creating opportunities for success within the country. He warned against complacency and asked the guests to “seize the moment”, in order to create a more successful and prosperous Canada. (Read Minister Champagne’s op-ed piece that he generously wrote for GRIT following the dinner).



Tim Price (NEXT Visionary Donor)

Shikhar Ghosh (Harvard university)

Marie Chevr er (Sampler)

Ronen Benin (Glissner) & Bryan Gold (#paid)



HELPING BUSINESSES

AS

MINISTER OF INNOVATION,

Science and Industry, I can tell you it has been a whirlwind of a year.

Coming out of the pandemic, Canada is seizing opportunities and is engaged in a very real race among industrialized nations set against a backdrop of rapid growth in the development of green and digital technologies. In short, the industries of the future are being built.

Whether it is reimagining the Canadian auto sector, re-establishing a Canadian biomanufacturing sector, advancing our work to ensure all Canadians have access to the Internet, or supporting the Canadian tech companies working on artificial intelligence (AI) or quantum technologies, I have had the pleasure help broker deals that are reshaping the Canadian economy.


It is no surprise therefore, when I am meeting international partners that the question is not “Why Canada” anymore, but “How Canada?” People want more of what we have, and it is our job – the Government and the private sector – to ensure they keep coming back for more Canada.

We can do that by focusing on the things that matter:

- Prioritizing talent;
- Ensuring that, when our talent generates game-changing ideas, we squeeze every last ounce of benefit through the commercialization process; and,
- Adapting to address the economic drivers of a green and digital economy head on.

Governments around the world understand these three things. Institutional investors know them. Smart businesses know them, too. The reality is that countries that do not get the things that matter right will simply be left out of the economy of the future.

DEVELOPING AND NURTURING CANADIAN TALENT

It is vital that we continue to develop and nurture our talent. This is why one would be hard-pressed to find a Government of Canada innovation program without a skills component. For example, many agreements we make with companies under the umbrella of the [Strategic Innovation Fund](#) (SIF) contain requirements to provide co-op placements for 

CREATING JOBS, AND ATTRACTING TALENT TO BUILD A MORE RESILIENT FUTURE FOR ALL CANADIANS

The Honourable

FRANÇOIS-PHILIPPE CHAMPAGNE

Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry of Canada

SUCCEEDED



VOLKSWAGEN CANADA

SEDANS, HATCHBACKS, SUVs

BACK in my student days, packing up my old Volkswagen to drive myself to Ohio for university, I never imagined that I would one day play a part in convincing the venerable automaker to choose Canada over the US to anchor the next century of its operations. But here we are, celebrating the company's generational investment in jobs and clean growth in St. Thomas, Ontario.

Since those days, I have lived and worked in countries all over the world, but wherever I find myself, I always tell people how lucky I feel to be Canadian. I think of myself as a cheerleader – talking up my home team to anyone who will listen. That was certainly the message I took to Germany back in May 2022 when we really ramped up our efforts to attract the attention – and investment dollars – of the globally respected automotive company.

I cannot thank everyone enough for all the behind-the-scenes work that took place to make this \$7-billion windfall happen. We did not always strictly follow protocol – there were late-night text messages and unplanned pull-asides, but together, Team Canada really made it work.

The pitch was easy: Canada has the critical minerals as well as proximity to markets

and supply chains that VW needs to make green cars in North America. We also have access to zero-emission electricity, and a tariff advantage over the United States. But the real clincher, of course, is our world-class workforce talent in the auto and high-tech industries; as I always say, at the end of the day, it is all about people – talent drives innovation, so way to go to the hometown heroes in St. Thomas!

Volkswagen's decision to build its North American electric vehicle battery plant in that community is a big win not only for the hardworking folks who call it home, but really for all Canadians.

In terms of jobs, it will mean up to 3,000 direct jobs and thousands more across Canada's battery and EV ecosystems. In dollar figures, this initiative is expected to add at least \$200 billion to the Canadian economy over the coming decades.

Beyond just the numbers, however, Volkswagen's decision to build its first overseas gigafactory in Canada speaks to our country's competitiveness when it comes to attracting major investments and it represents a real vote of confidence in us, Canada, as the international green supplier of choice.

– FPC



(R) PHOTO BY ENG C. LAU



the innovators of tomorrow, and to collaborate with researchers at post-secondary institutions.

As well, our [Biomufacturing and Life Sciences Strategy](#) makes key investments to ensure that we have the talent to support an innovative and world-leading life sciences sector. And our efforts to ensure all Canadians have access to high-speed Internet will help those in rural and remote areas use the power of the Internet to get the education and develop the skills they need for our future economy.

Another way we are getting young people experience and skills is through partnerships between businesses and post-secondary institutions. Both our [College and Community Innovation Program](#) and [Mitacs](#) help Canadian institutions partner with businesses: companies get access to the talent and the tools needed for innovative solutions while students develop the skills to excel in Canada's economy. The benefits are clear – companies get the innovative thinking of Canada's best next-generation researchers, and the students make connections and get the experience to build rewarding careers.

As global and domestic labour trends accelerate, gaps are appearing between the demands of industry and the skillset of available workers. We are taking action to align the skills ecosystem with new industry demands through the [Upskilling for Industry Initiative](#). This investment will leverage industry, employers, post-secondary institutions and private training providers to deliver upskilling program to help more than 15,000 Canadian workers transition into new jobs in high-growth sectors such as digital technology, cybersecurity, agriculture technology, advanced manufacturing, clean technology and biomanufacturing.

Diversity is also critical to developing talent. Too often and for too long, diverse voices have been left out of the innovation stream when they could have added so much and help us grow our economy. That is why we decided to put in place the [50-30 Challenge](#) that aims to see 50 percent representation of women on boards and senior management, with 30 percent coming from other under-


represented groups. As well, initiatives like our [Black Entrepreneurship Program](#), our [Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy](#) help to bring the talents of all Canadians into the small business community.

While we work to build our talent base at home, we are also in a global competition for talent from abroad. That is why our new Tech Talent Strategy is so important, specifically our dedicated work permit stream targeting workers in high-tech fields who hold an H-1B non-immigrant visa. This will attract up to 10,000 H-1B visa holders with a three-year open work permit.

PUSHING THROUGH TO COMMERCIALIZATION

When it comes to commercialization, the [Global Innovation Clusters](#) are an excellent tool. They have expanded their presence globally and are collaborating to deepen their impact abroad on key government priorities. They are able to help companies by: attracting hundreds of millions of dollars of private investments; bringing together developers and adopters at the very start of projects; and connecting promising start-ups with their first customers.

They have become internationally recognized for their scale and ambition, and their ability to drive commercialization outcomes, scale and integrate SMEs into global value chains, and strengthen Canada's innovation ecosystems and industries.

Through their unique collaborative ecosystem model between the private sector, academia, governments, and 



ATTRACTING TALENTS

not-for-profits, they generate new partnerships, investments and collaborations which fuel the development of solutions with a commercial focus and market orientation, that no single organization could develop on its own. Backed by federal support, cluster project partners have taken their original ideas, turned them into secure Canadian-owned IP, then commercialized that IP for the benefit of Canadian businesses, Canadian industries, Canadian workers—for the benefit of Canada.

Complementing this, we have allocated funding for IP-rich firms through the SIF to secure promising, strategic firms and anchor them in Canada, and to improve Canada's short-term recovery and long-term growth. Such firms can be attractive to foreign capital investments, which could dilute Canadian control over home-grown IP and see the footprint of these companies grow elsewhere. We need to strengthen our home field advantage, giving these companies every opportunity to scale here at home as they win markets around the globe.

Large and successful anchor firms help stimulate innovation and strengthen our economy. Acknowledging

this, the Government of Canada recently launched the [Global Hypergrowth Project](#). This new and unique program leverages private-sector expertise and the best of what federal government has to offer to help Canada's most promising companies achieve global hypergrowth, anchored in Canada. By working with these firms and its federal partners, the program will identify opportunities to create new and innovative pathways to help all businesses to grow – to enable and embolden our leading firms to scale globally, while keeping their roots in Canada.

Finally, we also support the commercialization and strategic procurement of made-in-Canada innovations through [Innovation Solutions Canada](#) (ISC). Through leveraging the procurement dollars of the Government, the program offers support to Canadian small businesses to develop their innovations from early stage conception through until late stage development. ISC also offers the opportunity for Canadian companies to test their prototypes in real world settings to further support their commercialization ambitions.

A GREEN AND DIGITAL ECONOMY

It stands to reason that many of our future anchor firms will reside in digital and/or green industries. The world is undergoing one of the most substantive changes since the industrial revolution in transitioning to greener energy and a digital economy.

In terms of the green imperative, one only needs to check their thermometers or look out their window to see we have been hit with record-high temperatures, unprecedented flooding and massive ice loss; our country is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. Just stepping outside earlier this year, smoke filled the air due to raging forest fires in Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

This environmental imperative to act has naturally inspired an economic transition to green energy and technologies.

To set the conditions for success, the Government of Canada has developed a comprehensive regulatory system that upholds the highest standards of safety and environmental responsibility, while at the same time moving at the speed of business.

Complementing this, we have introduced tax incentives to encourage adoption of clean technologies. In fact, to meet our net-zero emission targets by 2050, Budget 2023 committed \$60 billion in clean investment tax credits, which will make it easier for companies to build clean electricity and conduct clean technology manufacturing here at home.

Even with the right mix of tax incentives and regulations, there will be areas where the governments must be direct contributors to take risks and make bets in major industries.

The SIF's Net Zero Accelerator has been a key tool in this regard. The investments we have made, and will continue to make, from this fund are creating Canadian leadership in new industries like EV and battery manufacturing, which will have a big pay off for years to come as we strengthen our position in global supply chains.

Of course, in laying the groundwork for more rapid adoption of clean technologies across all sectors of the

economy, we also need to ensure that we are effectively supporting homegrown Canadian clean tech by creating opportunities for these companies to scale up domestically.

Canadian companies are global leaders in areas such as carbon capture and hydrogen fuel cell technology, and I want to see these companies remain Canadian companies – that is why we will continue to invest in cleantech innovation and commercialization, and support the adoption of made-in-Canada cleantech solutions.

In concert with our net-zero transition, we have seen the application of digital technologies in all sectors of the economy completely revolutionize all aspects of our social and economic lives.

All of this is made possible though through access to the Internet. Just like the push to rapidly increase access to electricity helped lift us out of the Great Depression, every Canadian needs access to digital and Internet to participate in today's data-driven digital economy. That is why we are working aggressively to get all Canadians – regardless of

[The Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy](#) and the [National Quantum Strategy](#) are working to support Canadian superstars reach new heights, attract the best and brightest researchers from abroad to come to Canada, train young Canadians in these technology areas, and then commercialize this research and help founders grow in Canada. All of this work is why Canada ranks fifth globally to the Stanford Human-Centred AI Index.

There are just so many opportunities in this new digital age, and we want to get everybody participating; but the flip-side to our new digital, data-heavy world is concerns about privacy.

This need to balance innovation with trust and privacy is a big reason why we are bringing in a [Digital Charter](#) through Bill C-27, also known as the Digital Charter Implementation Act. We want to make the most of a digital economy, but also we want people to have a high level of trust in what's going on. And that trust comes from transparency. So the Bill strengthens privacy protections for Canadians, and

PEOPLE WANT MORE OF WHAT WE HAVE, AND IT IS OUR JOB – THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR – TO ENSURE THEY KEEP COMING BACK FOR MORE CANADA.

where they live in our country – online, connected, with high-speed access at affordable prices.

From a small business perspective, COVID-19 showed us the power of going digital. Companies that were able to adapt survived and even prospered; while those without digital capabilities struggled. So that's a big reason why our new [Canada Digital Adoption Program](#) is helping smaller companies digitize how they run their business behind the scenes. This \$4-billion program is the biggest investment in Canadian history to help Canadian businesses adopt digital technologies.

At the industrial level, the proliferation of cheap sensors, computational power and the ubiquity of the internet has enabled traditional sectors to analyze data and get new insights – transforming the basis of competition for these traditional industries and making them more efficient. For example, farmers are unlocking the power of data to measure and respond to just the slightest differences in the soil or with their livestock. It is also supporting autonomous farm equipment to help the sector tackle labour shortages.

Meanwhile those same drivers are putting emerging tech like AI and quantum technologies into overdrive. This is like the digital revolution on steroids.

proposes new ways to protect a fair marketplace in the digital era. It represents the most significant change to Canada's private sector privacy law in 20 years.

CANADA'S FUTURE IS BRIGHT

My mission every day is simple: I ask myself how can I work across all levels of government, from federal to municipal, to help Canadian businesses succeed, create jobs, attract talent, build a more resilient future – a better future?

We are building the future together, and that future is green, it is digital and it is built around talented Canadians.

We are supporting these areas through a whole-of-government approach, involving investments in the infrastructure and companies to root the industries of the future in Canada and help transform existing sectors of strength. In concert, we are using every tool at our disposal to provide direction to industry and protect Canadians, and entering into new partnerships with our allies to tackle these global problems together.

While much progress has been made in these areas, much also remains to be done. I am committed to ensuring that our government works diligently to advance these priorities and creates the conditions for more hometown heroes.



COQUITLAM, BC



SUMREEN RATTAN
(EM-)POWERING THE NATION



Co-founder & COO,
Moment Energy



Next 36,
2020



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sumreen-rattan/>

Tell us a little bit about your venture.

What big problems are you solving?

Moment Energy is a cleantech company creating clean, affordable, and reliable battery energy storage systems (BESS) by repurposing retired electric vehicle (EVs) batteries. Our BESS helps utilities, microgrids and commercial customers improve grid reliability and replace fossil fuel consumption with renewable energy. The solution also significantly reduces utility demand costs for on-grid commercial customers by using energy storage for peak shaving.

What inspired you to start this venture?

In the journey to start Moment Energy, my co-founders Edward Chiang (Moment Energy's CEO), Gurmeh Sidhu (Moment Energy's CPO), and Gabriel Soares (Moment Energy's CTO) have played an irreplaceable role. The challenge of what happens to these EV batteries after their use in EVs struck a chord with each of us, and planted the seeds for our venture.

What have you accomplished through your work with this venture that you are the most proud of?

Firstly, developing relationships with major companies like Mercedes-Benz Energy has enabled us to develop cutting-edge BESSs that address the challenges of EV battery

disposal and grid reliability.

Our ability to upscale the company from a modest start in a family garage to a large operation employing thirty-eight people and expanding to a new manufacturing facility in Coquitlam is a point of pride. Lastly, my work at Moment Energy has provided me with a platform to inspire more women to enter tech and business fields.

What kind of impact do you hope your work has on communities 10 years from now?

Looking a decade ahead, I see Moment Energy etching a significant mark on communities worldwide. Our goal? Be a global leader in giving EV batteries a second life, closing the circular economy loop, and offering accessible clean energy worldwide.

What is one thing you hope folks walk away understanding about the work you're doing?

If there's one key takeaway from our mission, it's the untapped potential that lies within used EV batteries. These batteries, after their first life, hold significant energy reserves suitable for less intensive uses. With increasing global electricity consumption, our power grids will require BESS support. By repurposing these batteries, we turn potential waste into a valuable resource, benefiting both our business and the planet.

(L) PHOTO BY JAMES WHEELER

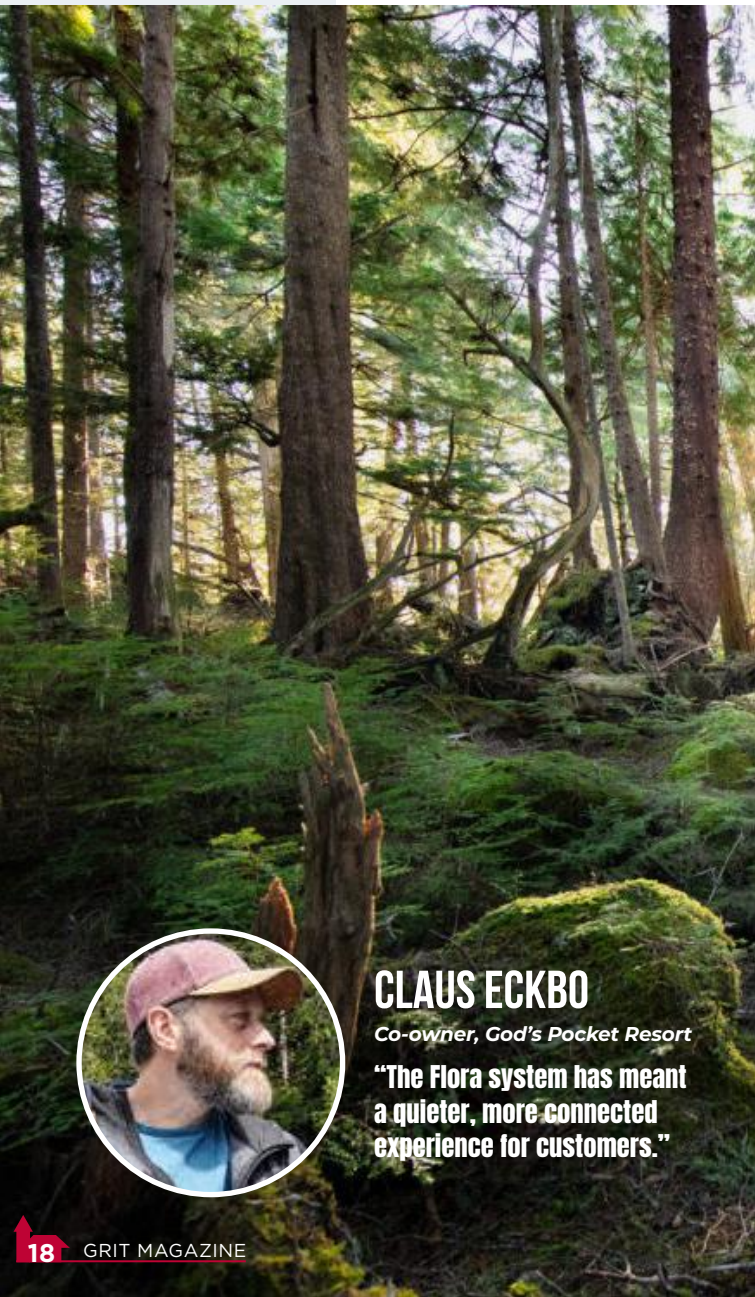


AN Empowering MOMENT

NESTLED WITHIN THE PRISTINE BEAUTY

of British Columbia's rugged west coast lies [God's Pocket](#), an off-grid lodge known for its exceptional connection with nature and commitment to providing visitors with an authentic and nourishing experience. This hidden gem is more than just a resort; it's a community that has found its partner in Moment Energy, an innovative, sustainable energy company founded by NEXT Alumni, Sumreen Rattan and Edward Chiang. Together, they are changing lives and redefining what it means to live harmoniously with the environment.

Situated on an isolated island, God's Pocket offers its visitors heated rooms with en suite bathrooms, mouthwatering meals, and access to world-class scuba diving and kayaking adventures. Yet, the charm and allure of God's Pocket are rooted in its commitment to nature and authenticity. ➡



CLAUS ECKBO

Co-owner, God's Pocket Resort

“The Flora system has meant a quieter, more connected experience for customers.”

However, the allure comes with challenges. Operating off-grid in such a remote location poses numerous hurdles, from generating power and water to managing waste. Maintaining a consistently comfortable and sustainable experience for guests in this environment demands ingenuity, resilience, and innovative solutions.

Enter Moment Energy and their groundbreaking Flora system. Committed to fostering sustainability, Moment Energy brought their expertise and technology to God's Pocket, becoming a guiding light in the lodge's quest for environmental harmony. The Moment Flora installation, featuring two 48 kWh packs, has revolutionized how the lodge operates. By remotely monitoring power metrics and providing redundancy through parallel operation, Moment Energy's system offers a newfound sense of security and efficiency.

For God's Pocket, sustainability is not just a buzzword; it's a way of life. The Flora system has been a game-changer, reducing generator run time by a staggering 80% and cutting generator emissions by more than half. The packs, designed with an eye toward the future, can seamlessly accommodate additional renewable energy sources, promising further reductions in emissions and a brighter, greener future for the lodge.

Working closely together, Moment Energy and God's Pocket have embraced challenges, celebrated victories, and co-created solutions tailored to the unique demands of the remote environment. The relationship with Moment Energy has brought more than just technological advancements; it has created a culture of communication, problem-solving, and positive collaboration. As a result, God's Pocket has not only adopted innovative technology but has also gained a newfound sense of resilience and adaptability.

The impact of Moment Energy's Flora system extends far beyond the operational realm. The transformation has touched the very core of the community and its visitors. With the Flora system in place, God's Pocket offers guests

THE ABILITY TO OPERATE SERVICES ON BATTERY POWER ELIMINATES THE NEED FOR NOISY GENERATORS.

a quieter, more immersive experience. The ability to operate services on battery power eliminates the need for noisy generators, enabling the lodge to curate a more customizable and conscious schedule. As guests learn about the lodge's sustainability initiatives, their reactions are nothing short of awe-inspired; smiles and applause abound.

God's Pocket and Moment Energy stand as beacons of change, exemplifying how a partnership grounded in shared values and a commitment to sustainability can reshape not only an operational landscape but also a community's way of life. By embracing Moment Energy's innovative Flora system, God's Pocket has ushered in a new era of quiet resilience, reduced emissions, and deeper connections with nature. This partnership reminds us that even in the most remote corners of the world, transformation is possible, and through sustainable solutions, we can create a brighter, greener future for all.



CONVERSATION WITH LEADERSHIP VOLUNTEER

Colleen McMorrow

Much of what happens at NEXT Canada takes place in public. The very nature of entrepreneurship conjures up images of a maverick CEO standing before a spellbound audience while presenting a new breakthrough or innovation. However, behind every great entrepreneur and within every great organization are those people who are fastidiously focused on the numbers. **COLLEEN McMORROW**, a retired partner at EY is one of those people – and as a NEXT Canada Board member and Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee, she is critical to the success of NEXT Canada and has been instrumental in ensuring a clear and transparent level of accountability. We sat down with Colleen to discuss her role at NEXT and her passion for entrepreneurship. ➔

With

AN ENVIUS CAREER SPANNING DECADES, COLLEEN radiates an aura of certainty that only those truly confident can. Colleen has been on the Board of Directors of NEXT Canada for 8 years, but her career is rooted in the world of accounting and auditing. Colleen worked at Ernst and Young for 38 years as a CPA. While at EY, she took the reins of EY's Entrepreneur of the Year Awards program for nine years. During this time, she was immersed in Canada's bustling entrepreneurial ecosystem, which left a lasting impact. In an indirect way, that was how she came to first hear about NEXT Canada and its mission.

"I happened to see an article in the Globe and Mail that talked about the formation of an entrepreneurial institute called the NEXT 36, and it was Claudia Hepburn who was being interviewed, and she was talking about the mission and the vision of NEXT. And it was, first and foremost, to increase prosperity in Canada. Who couldn't buy into that?"

Soon after, Colleen, at the time working at EY, proposed a partnership with NEXT Canada (known as NEXT 36 at the time). She wanted EY to be involved with NEXT from the very beginning. Today, EY proudly remains a sponsor of NEXT Canada. Colleen's efforts at EY, partnering with NEXT Canada led to some interesting initiatives. One such initiative was integrating Kira Talent, a NEXT Canada venture, into EY's Entrepreneur of the Year Awards program. Colleen recognized the potential synergy between Kira Talent's interview platform and the awards program's need for a genuine and spontaneous interview process. This collaboration not only enriched the awards program but also demonstrated the power of connecting entrepreneurial ventures with established organizations. Not only that, another program that Colleen ran during her time at EY, Entrepreneurial Winning Women, has just announced their selection of founders and it includes a NEXT Canada alumna, Marie Chevrier, the founder and CEO of Sampler.

Colleen's commitment to creating intersection points between NEXT Canada and other programs she was involved in showcases her dedication to fostering entrepreneurship.

After retiring from EY, coming onto the NEXT Canada's Board of Directors was a natural progression for Colleen. She had seen NEXT in its formative stage and wanted to be a part of "an organization focused on developing talent, developing future leaders." Colleen describes the experience of being on the Board as energizing. She especially likes the fact that there are a number of NEXT alumni on the Board as well. Emily Cushman, Ian Burgess, Braden Ream, Mallorie Brodie and Lauren Lake, all bring

their experience as founders of relatively new companies to the Board and that, Colleen believes, adds value to the Board. She believes in the power of continuous learning and appreciates the fresh perspectives and in-novative thinking that the alumni bring to the table.


When asked about advice for aspiring entrepreneurs, Colleen emphasized the importance of determination and commitment. She believes that never giving up, even when faced with challenges, is the key to success. Her journey with NEXT Canada reflects her belief in the potential of the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Even though she retired from EY, Colleen continues to serve on numerous prestigious Boards and believes in exploring new opportunities to pursue the goals close to her heart. She wants to travel more and invest more time into fitness and wellbeing. But above all, she wants to spend quality time with her new grandson.

Colleen McMorrow's remarkable journey from the world of assurance to entrepreneurship and her ongoing commitment to NEXT Canada exemplify the power of connecting established professionals with aspiring entrepreneurs. Her story serves as an inspiration for all those who seek to support and nurture the next generation of leaders and innovators in Canada.

I THINK HAVING THE ALUMNI ENGAGE AS PART OF THE STRATEGY, THE VISION, AND CONTINUING TO DRIVE THE MISSION IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL.

NEXT
CANADA



**“I wouldn’t be the leader
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BRADEN REAM (Next 36, 2018)

Founder & CEO of Voiceflow, chose to donate to NEXT Canada so that future aspiring founders can have access to the same transformative experience he did.

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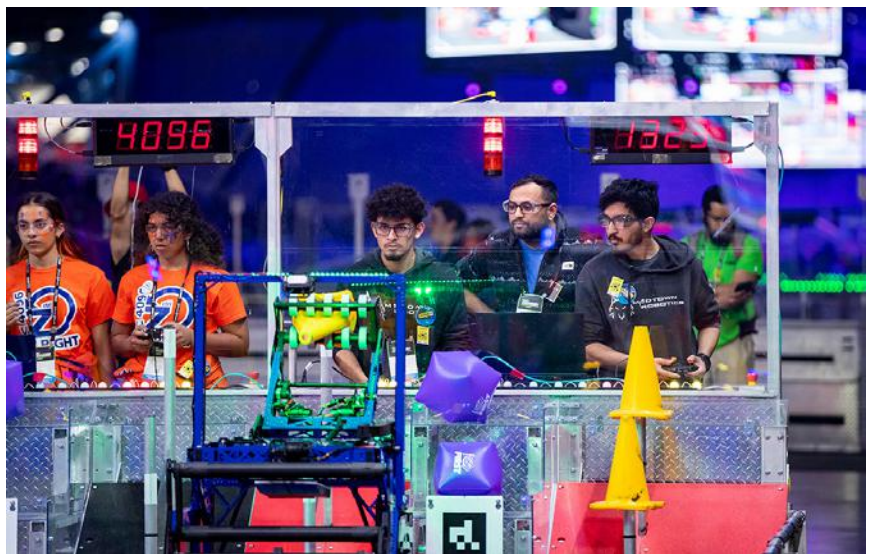


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FIRST® ROBOTICS IS A PROGRAM THAT

Hatch, a global engineering, project management, and professional services firm and a corporate sponsor of *FIRST®*, finds particularly inspiring and valuable. Hatch and *FIRST®* share a common goal of fostering positive change and nurturing a brighter future by inspiring the next generation of science and technology leaders. Driven by the dedication of Hatch employees who volunteer as mentors, this partnership embodies the essence of true community heroes, igniting sparks of interest in STEM.

Employees from Hatch participate as mentors, competition judges, and educators, guiding aspiring engineers and coders from high schools across Canada on the journey to design, build, and program robots, which are then used in a head-to-head challenge with other *FIRST®* Robotics teams. The shared success is evident as numerous *FIRST®* Robotics alumni find careers within Hatch, a testament to the power of inspiration.

One success story belongs to Alex Wigle, a piping engineer within Hatch's Autoclave group. His years of involvement in *FIRST®* Robotics began as a student, demonstrating the significance of nurturing science and engineering passions among students. For Alex, the *FIRST®* Robotics program

supports young talents in recognizing that dreams can evolve into reality through passion. Since joining Hatch, Alex has been a champion for the *FIRST®* program, advocating for the company's continued sponsorship and acting as a coach to numerous teams over the years.

Brittany MacKinnon, a process engineer in Hatch's Pyrometallurgy group, has an equally inspiring *FIRST®* Robotics story. Her journey from student participant to mentor reflects the transformative nature of the program, which nurtured her creativity, communication, and leadership skills—qualities she now shares with the next generation. Recently relocating to Australia from Canada, she is now expanding Hatch's involvement in the program to new schools and regions.

Looking forward, Hatch's collaboration with the *FIRST®* Robotics program will continue to provide rewarding mentorship opportunities and have lasting effects. Inspiring others, fostering a pipeline of engineers and scientists, and building lasting relationships that have the transformative power to create solutions to the world's challenges—this is what Hatch hometown heroes contribute. And the reward? Watching aspiring young minds take their place in an increasingly complex world with confidence, skill, and optimism.



CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI

NATASHA DHAYAGUDE

RECOMMENDED: A MUSHROOM DIET



Co-founder & COO,
Chinova Bioworks



Next Founders,
2020



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/natashadhayagude/>

Tell us a little bit about your venture.

What big problems are you solving?

Chinova Bioworks, a Canadian food-tech company founded in 2016, aims to revolutionize the food and beverage industry with natural and sustainable ingredients from white button mushrooms. Our key product, Chiber™, improves product quality, freshness, and shelf-life for manufacturers while reducing food waste and providing broad-spectrum protection.

What inspired you to start this venture?

My co-founder, Dave Brown, and I met at an entrepreneurship accelerator in New Brunswick. We shared a passion for making an environmental impact using our scientific backgrounds in biochemistry and microbiology. Our interest in white button mushrooms and their health benefits facilitated an even sturdier connection.

To address challenges like food waste and artificial ingredients, we discovered Chiber™, a natural fiber from white button mushrooms. This sustainable alternative to artificial ingredients acts as a shelf-life extender, preserving food quality and freshness by protecting against spoilage-causing microorganisms.

What have you accomplished through your work with this venture that you are the most proud of?

Everything. It's not just one thing. It's seeing everything come together, such as fulfilling the mission to reduce food waste, making products healthier and more. It's

the team my co-founder and I hand-picked, and watching the success of the company expand into a profitable business.

What kind of impact do you hope your work has on communities 10 years from now?

Chinova's solution adds value throughout the food supply chain, from upcycling mushroom stems that would otherwise go to waste to creating a cost-saving food protection solution for brands. By using Chiber™, brands can offer customers improved, longer-lasting products. Notably, every kilogram of Chiber™ sold reduces emissions equivalent to charging 5474 cell phones or driving 182 kilometers in your car.

What is one thing you hope folks walk away understanding about the work you're doing?

The traditional ingredient manufacturing sector relies on artificial additives, but rising consumer demand for transparency pressures producers to reformulate. Mushroom innovation is growing in the food industry due to its health benefits. Our technology offers producers a clean-label solution, enhancing product quality and shelf life effectively.

Empowering outsiders in entrenched industries is slow. As a minority woman in STEM, I understand this challenge. Leading in my field, I'm dedicated to equal opportunities for women like me, promoting diversity at Chinova where 73% of our R&D team are women.

(L) PHOTO ©TOURISM PEI / STEPHEN DESROCHES; (R) PHOTO BY FREERIK

HOME OF

LABORATORY USHROOMING INNOVATION

IN THE REALM OF INNOVATION, the impact of collaboration cannot be overstated. Chinova Bioworks, under the leadership of NEXT Canada Alumna, Natasha Dhayagude, has forged a powerful collaboration with [PEI BioAlliance](#) to catalyze transformation within both, the industry and the local community of Charlottetown, PEI. Through a shared vision and the platform of the BioScience Manufacturing Incubator (BMI), Chinova and PEI BioAlliance are not only redefining bio-based solutions but also demonstrating how collective efforts can create profound community impact.

The PEI BioAlliance's BioScience Manufacturing Incubator (BMI) stands as an embodiment of PEI's commitment to cultivating the bioscience sector. A cutting-edge facility spanning 20,000 sq/ft, the BMI features six meticulously designed units, equipped to support the entire spectrum of bio-based product manufacturing, from pilot phases to full-scale production. This facility adheres to stringent regulatory standards required for health and nutrition product development, encompassing a diverse range of offerings, from food and feed ingredients to probiotics, natural preservatives, aquatic health products, and ↻



(CL) PHOTO BY ONLYYOUJ ON FREEPIK. (MUSHROOM) PHOTO BY RACOOJ_STUDIO ON FREEPIK

natural health products.

At the heart of this transformative initiative lies the symbiotic relationship between Chinova Bioworks and PEI BioAlliance. As Chinova moved into the BMI, this partnership has flourished, highlighting the significance of fostering connections between startups and local stakeholders. The strong rapport built by Chinova and the PEI BioAlliance has paved the way for an even more robust alliance, amplifying Chinova's presence in PEI and the broader Atlantic Canada region.

The impact of this partnership reverberates far beyond industry advancements. The PEI BioAlliance, as a private sector-led not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to fortifying PEI's bioscience landscape. This collaboration between Chinova and the PEI BioAlliance has forged an environment that cultivates research, development, and an inclusive culture. This holistic approach has translated into robust business support, fostering economic growth, generating employment opportunities, and invigorating the local economy.

A key facet of this partnership lies in their shared commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. By championing these values within the workplace, Chinova and the PEI BioAlliance have fostered a culture that

celebrates diversity and drives innovation through varied perspectives, enriching the social fabric of PEI.

As a testament to their shared commitment to innovation and community upliftment, Chinova and the PEI BioAlliance are collaborating with Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC), where they are addressing the escalating demand for health-focused, natural, and clean-label ingredients. SDTC's substantial investment of \$1.5 million is propelling Chinova's pioneering efforts to upcycle mushroom waste into a commercially viable preservation ingredient. This innovation has the potential to significantly reduce food waste throughout the entire agricultural supply chain, aligning perfectly with global sustainability objectives.

The collaboration between Chinova Bioworks and the PEI BioAlliance epitomizes the transformative power of unity, innovation, and community engagement. Beyond revolutionizing the bioscience sector, this partnership is shaping a brighter future for the local PEI community. By showcasing the possibilities that emerge when visionary organizations unite, Chinova and PEI BioAlliance exemplify the profound impact that can be achieved through collaboration, laying the groundwork for a more sustainable and inclusive tomorrow.

THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN CHINOVA BIOWORKS AND THE PEI BIOALLIANCE EPITOMIZES THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF UNITY, INNOVATION, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.



EDWARD FRANCIS

Business Development Associate, PEI BioAlliance

"Together, Chinova and the PEI BioAlliance have fostered a culture that celebrates diversity and drives innovation through varied perspectives, enriching the social fabric of PEI"



HOW SECOND HARVEST'S FOOD RESCUE APP HELPS REDUCE FOOD WASTE IN CANADA

FROM 2020 TO 2022, SECOND HARVEST DIVERTED 116 MILLION POUNDS OF FOOD, EQUATING TO MORE THAN 399 MILLION LBS OF GHG EMISSIONS PREVENTED.



Sioux Lookout, ON — Rescued food from Second Harvest is loaded onto a float plane for distribution to fly-in communities.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS ONE OF THE MOST pressing issues of our time and has created widespread issues across our society including food insecurity. There are no simple solutions or quick fixes.

A considerable contributor to the planet warming is greenhouse gases (GHGs) and a considerable contributor to GHGs is food waste. In addition to wasting the energy needed to grow and distribute it, food that ends up in landfills converts to the GHG methane.

Nearly 60 per cent of food produced in Canada is lost or wasted each year according to Second Harvest. A third of that waste is still edible, yet it goes to landfills instead of to those who could use it.

“During the pandemic food supply chains were disrupted and we saw food insecurity increase,” says Mark Beckles,

vice president, social impact and innovation, RBC. “That is where the ingenuity of the Second Harvest team and the financial support from RBC Tech for Nature came together to build a scalable solution through the Second Harvest food rescue app. Ensuring that the communities in need of healthy food were connected to the farmers that were in danger of discarding thousands of tonnes of food.”

As the largest food rescue charity in Canada Second Harvest was able to connect charities and non-profits with millions of pounds of healthy food to give their communities, which is saved from landfills that may in turn harm Canada’s environment.

The Second Harvest food rescue app allows donors to log on to the site any time they have surplus food to donate — whether it’s five or 500 pounds. The system then posts available food donations to local social service

organizations registered on the platform.

Through the app, by the end of 2022, Second Harvest helped more than 3,700 non-profits and 7,500 food programs in over nearly 900 communities in Canada. “The notifications come via computer and cell phone,” says Vicki England, a food bank coordinator in Sydenham, Ontario. “It’s hard to miss.”

“Food loss and waste is also one of the most significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions globally,” says Lori Nikkel, Second Harvest’s CEO. “And when food gets diverted from landfill and goes to those who need it, that means we’re also preventing those emissions from entering the atmosphere.”

Before March 2020, the platform served only Ontario and British Columbia; however, because of the increased support needed, Second Harvest was able to expand nationally in four weeks supported by the RBC Foundation, through RBC Tech for Nature. During the pandemic, Second Harvest’s food rescue app was also used to distribute PPE, provide financial grants and grocery gift cards to non-profits serving people in need coast to coast to coast.

“In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we scaled the system up much faster than we originally intended,” says Nikkel. “We saw the incredible increase in the need for food in communities across the country, and thanks to partners like the RBC Foundation, we were able to get this running nationwide.”

Via the Surplus Food Rescue Program developed by the Canadian government, Second Harvest also received funding to purchase food that would potentially go to waste to distribute the food to hundreds of charities and non-profits — including those in fly-in communities.



Food distribution at the InterVarsity Pioneer Camp in Winnipeg, MB

“Supporting new ideas, technologies and partnerships to solve pressing environmental challenges is how we bring RBC Tech for Nature to life,” said Mark Beckles, vice-president, social impact & innovation, RBC. “That’s why we knew that supporting Second Harvest and their work through the food rescue app would have an important impact on people’s daily lives and the planet long term.”

Second Harvest is supported by the RBC Foundation through RBC Tech for Nature, RBC’s multi-year commitment to accelerate tech-based solutions that help preserve the world’s greatest wealth: the natural ecosystem. RBC works with partners to leverage technology and innovation capabilities to solve pressing environmental challenges. RBC Tech for Nature is a key element of how RBC is delivering on its climate strategy, the RBC Climate Blueprint. This strategy includes four key priorities: helping clients as they transition to net-zero, holding itself accountable, informing and inspiring a sustainable future, and advancing net-zero leadership in its operations. Learn more at rbc.com/techfornature.

A WORD FROM OUR LAWYERS

This article offers general information only and is not intended as legal, financial or other professional advice. A professional advisor should be consulted regarding your specific situation. While information presented is believed to be factual and current, its accuracy is not guaranteed and it should not be regarded as a complete analysis of the subject matter discussed. All expressions of opinion reflect the judgment of the author(s) as of the date of publication and are subject to change. No endorsement of any third parties or their advice, opinions, information, products or services is expressly given or implied by Royal Bank of Canada or its affiliates.



Using salmon rescued by Second Harvest, an elder at Helen’s Fish Camp, on the traditional territory of the Ta’an Kwach’an Council in Whitehorse, YT teaches traditional preparation techniques.



ST. JOHN'S, NL



EMILY BLAND

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



SeedEO,
SucSeed



Next 36,
2018



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/emilybland/>

Tell us a little bit about your venture.

What big problems are you solving?

SucSeed promotes sustainable agriculture and healthy eating with hydroponic gardens in classrooms and rural areas. Partnering with Choices for Youth, these gardens employ at-risk youth in St. John's, NL. They're 99% Canadian sourced, costing <30 cents/day, growing 1,000+ produce types. SucSeed's Sustainable Superheroes teach composting and waste reduction. Educating students empowers informed, sustainable choices.

What inspired you to start this venture?

SucSeed started as a student project by Enactus Memorial, addressing food security in Northern communities. Our initial prototype used basic materials like duct tape, containers, and velcro. Media coverage generated 100+ inquiries. To meet demand, we partnered with Choices for Youth. In a year, SucSeed had 500 systems nationwide and won the Enactus World Cup. Co-founders Andrea Peet and I later made SucSeed a standalone social enterprise graduating.

What have you accomplished through your work with this venture that you are the most proud of?

We've achieved a lot: educating 35,000

students yearly, training 500 educators annually. Partnering with 250 community groups annually, we've conserved 8M liters of water, cut 200+ tonnes of CO2, and reduced food waste and plastic. With 3 kids' books, BCorp status, and 5,000 gardens nationwide, we're all about green spaces. We've given 6,000 hours' work to at-risk youth, employing 40+. Across 100+ communities, we're inclusive, driving positive change.

What kind of impact do you hope your work has on communities 10 years from now?

We want to create a generation of leaders who are actively involved in their food systems and helping to create a sustainable agriculture sector. Our hope is that, in a decade, everyone, no matter their location or income will have access to fresh, affordable produce.

What is one thing you hope folks walk away understanding about the work you're doing?

We hope people walk away understanding that our food system isn't stable. We need to invest in agriculture, support farmers and educate the next generation on how they can help to rebuild it. It is a complex problem, but it can be fixed.




(L) PHOTO ST JOHN'S @DANIELMACKINNON



PLANTING SEEDS OF KNOWLEDGE

IN THE EVER-CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF EDUCATION, hands-on experiences have proven to be invaluable for young minds. Emphasizing sustainability and environmental awareness from a young age can foster a generation of responsible and environmentally-conscious individuals. At Ecole St. Matthew's School, a Kindergarten FI class embarked on an inspiring journey with SucSeed, promoting sustainability through hydroponics and composting. Laun Shoemaker, the teacher for the class and the winner of the Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence, 2021, led the charge, introducing SucSeed products to his classroom.

Shoemaker, an experienced educator, was initially introduced to SucSeed through a colleague at another school who had set up one of their hydroponic units in his classroom. Enthralled by the unit's productivity and the concept of hydroponics, he was eager to integrate it into his Kindergarten class.

The students, aged 4 to 6 years, were at an impressionable age where environmental awareness could shape their understanding of the world. While basic concepts like littering and pollution were familiar to the children, SucSeed's program and Shoemaker's efforts exposed them to broader sustainability issues, with a focus on climate change and the importance of taking positive action. Shoemaker 

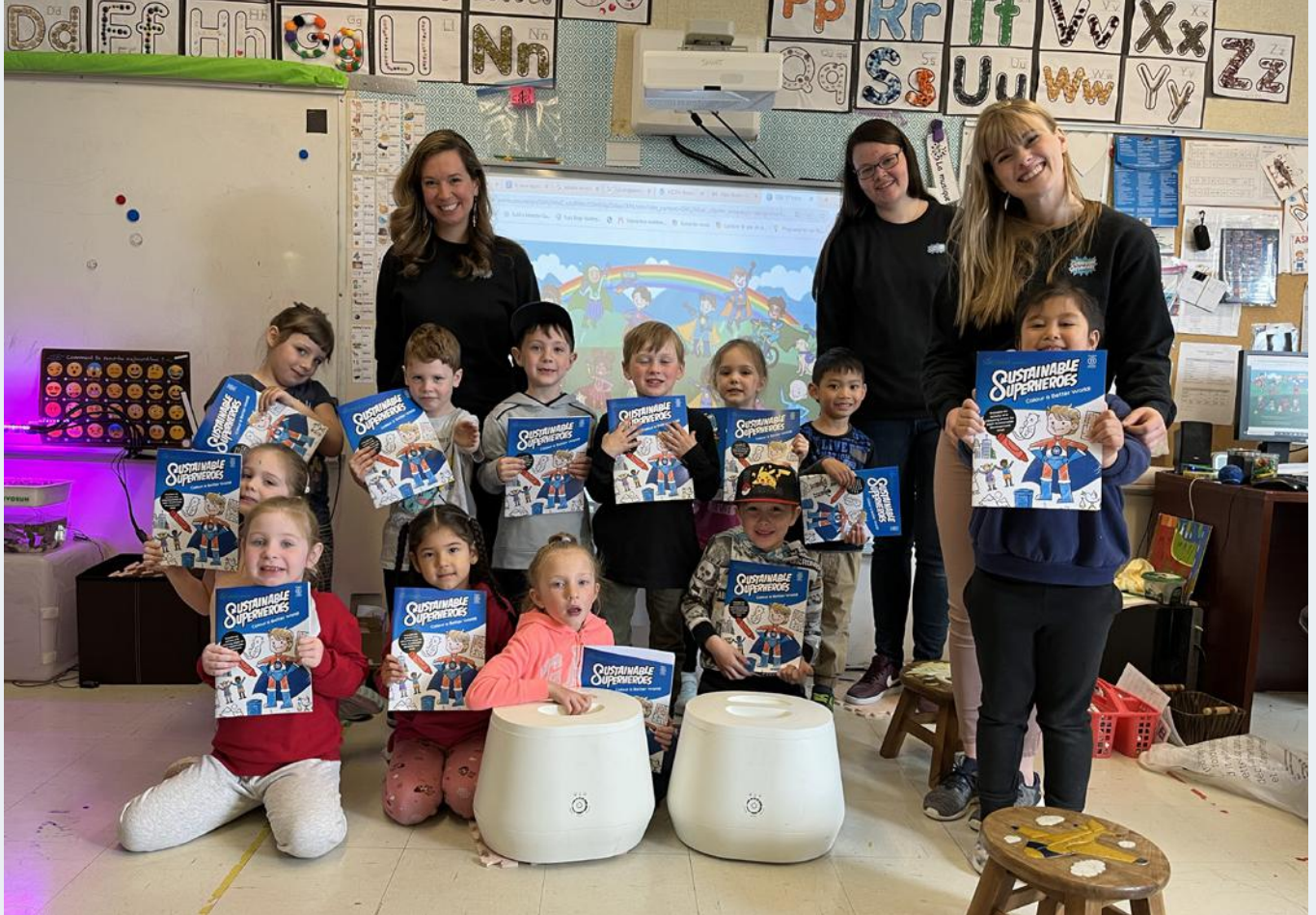


LAUN SHOEMAKER

Kindergarden Teacher at Ecole St. Matthew's School

"It was a great learning experience for the students and, I think, where the future of much of our produce may lie."





THE LIVING, GROWING GARDEN PROVIDED INVALUABLE LESSONS ABOUT FOOD SOURCES AND CYCLES.

achieved this through SucSeed's engaging "Sustainable Superheroes" books, featuring characters dedicated to working towards sustainability goals. These books offered age-appropriate ways to address complex issues, empowering the students to be part of the solution. By introducing sustainability as a fun and exciting journey, he laid the groundwork for building a generation of environmentally responsible citizens.

The journey began with the setup of the hydroponic unit early in the school year. The children eagerly chose from a selection of seeds, planting them in rockwool pots. Throughout the year, they witnessed the growth of kale, peppers, and tomatoes, sparking their curiosity and enthusiasm. A few students emerged as passionate growers, diligently monitoring the plants' progress and taking on the role of the first kale harvesters. They even taught their peers how to cut back the kale for regrowth, promoting sustainability in action.

The introduction of the Lomi unit, which allowed composting in the classroom, further heightened the students' excitement. They actively participated in the composting process, learning what materials could and could not be composted. With minimal guidance from the teacher, the students took ownership of the composting process, creating a sense of responsibility and pride.

The impact on the students' experience was nothing short of fantastic. The living, growing garden provided invaluable

lessons about food sources and cycles. Harvesting kale and making kale chips became a joyful activity, encouraging even the pickiest eaters to give it a try. Witnessing the life cycle of banana peppers taught the children about patience, counting, and various science concepts.

The success of SucSeed's program at Ecole St. Matthew's School is a testament to its potential in classrooms across the country. By providing in-class support and tailored educational resources, SucSeed ensures that teachers feel confident in implementing these initiatives. The combination of hydroponics and composting not only enriches the curriculum but also instills essential life skills, such as care, sharing, and critical thinking.

Laun Shoemaker's efforts in integrating SucSeed's hydroponic unit with his classrooms at the Ecole St. Matthew's School has proved to be an exceptional educational journey, leaving a lasting impact on young students. By instilling sustainability and environmental awareness from an early age, the program empowered children to become the responsible stewards our planet needs. Initiatives like these are crucial for nurturing a generation that not only understands the environmental challenges ahead but is also equipped to make positive changes. As other schools across the country consider implementing similar programs, they can look to Shoemaker and his collaboration with SucSeed as a model of success and inspiration for cultivating sustainable minds.

How do creative entrepreneurs help solve for the new world?

Here's to the entrepreneurs who rise to the challenges of "what now" for a better "what's next."

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Building a better working world



SAVING LIVES, BUILDING COMMUNITY

ONE ENTREPRENEUR'S REMARKABLE IMPACT

I'M THRILLED TO INTRODUCE you to Jim Estill, CEO and owner of Danby Appliances, and the winner of the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year 2019 Ontario award. A beacon of inspiration in entrepreneurship, philanthropy, and social impact, his journey is one of remarkable achievements.



When the team at NEXT approached me with the theme of GRIT, which highlights Hometown Heroes making transformative changes, one of the individual who immediately came to mind was Jim Estill.

Hailing from Guelph, Jim's unwavering dedication to philanthropic endeavors has set Danby on a path that's nothing short of remarkable. The company achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first Canadian business to secure a Sponsorship Agreement Holder designation from the Government of Canada. This achievement has enabled them to play a pivotal role in aiding the resettlement of refugees arriving in the country.

As the executive-in-residence at NEXT Canada and a Partner at EY Canada, I've had the privilege of working with extraordinary individuals who shape entrepreneurship. However, Jim's journey, and his work in Guelph especially, showcases the potential of entrepreneurship to bring about substantial societal transformations.

At NEXT Canada, we nurture bright minds, guiding them in entrepreneurship. Jim Estill's narrative will surely inspire our entrepreneurs, motivating them to embrace both business success and global responsibility.



DHARMESH GANDHI

*Partner, SR&ED,
Incentives and Capital
Investments, EY Canada,
& Executive in Residence
(Leadership Volunteer),
NEXT Canada*



Jim Estill, CEO, Danby Appliances

A

AHMAD ABED ARRIVED IN GUELPH, a small Canadian city, as a Syrian refugee seeking a new beginning. His life had been upended by the devastating conflict in his homeland, leaving him and his family displaced and without a future. Little did Ahmad know that his journey would intersect with the remarkable **JIM ESTILL**, a man who runs a refugee program with the precision of a business, offering not just a helping hand, but a pathway to empowerment and integration.

Estill, CEO and owner of [Danby Appliances](#), took Ahmad under his wing, providing more than just shelter and assistance. Recognizing the importance of self-reliance, Estill offered Ahmad a chance to work temporarily at Danby Appliances, where he could earn his livelihood while attending English classes during work hours. Ahmad jumped at the opportunity that resonated with his deep-rooted desire to contribute and regain control over his life's trajectory.

Ahmad's story encapsulates the broader impact Estill has had on the small community of Guelph. Beyond a simple act of charity, Estill has spearheaded a comprehensive refugee support program that embodies compassion, empowerment, and community integration. His philanthropic efforts extend far beyond providing shelter; they encompass language education, employment opportunities, and even the establishment of a furniture

bank, the "Circle Home," which furnishes homes for refugees and newcomers.

Estill's journey into humanitarian work was motivated by the Syrian crisis, which prompted him to initiate a mission to sponsor 50 Syrian refugee families. What began as a pledge turned into a legacy of helping over 1,000 individuals from various countries find solace, opportunity, and community in Guelph. Estill's four pillars of success—employment, language proficiency, integration, and giving back—have paved the way for numerous success stories. From an electrical engineer who transitioned from factory work to practicing his profession to pharmacists who recertified and returned to their careers, the impact of these individuals on their new community is evident. Notably, a family established a thriving sock store in a local mall, showcasing the symbiotic relationship between refugee success and community growth.

Estill's "Circle Home" project reflects his dedication to creating environments that nurture stability and a sense of belonging. Recognizing that arriving refugees often lack basic household furnishings, Circle Home repurposes community donations to provide essential furniture and housewares to newcomers. Through this initiative, the transition to a new country becomes smoother, and a warm, welcoming atmosphere is established in their new homes.

Estill's approach to philanthropy extends to his business, Danby Appliances. He has instilled a culture of giving within the company, encouraging employees to engage in charitable initiatives and community service. By connecting the act of "doing good" with business operations, Estill has exemplified how organizations can positively impact their communities while remaining successful.

For those aspiring to make a meaningful difference,

Estill's journey offers invaluable lessons. Start with passion and dedication, he advises, and find a cause that resonates with you. Even the smallest actions, when done consistently and purposefully, can create significant change. Seek collaborations and partnerships with like-minded individuals and organizations to amplify your impact. Patience and persistence are key, as creating lasting change takes time and effort.

Jim Estill's impact on the small community of Guelph cannot be understated. Through his tireless efforts, he has not only offered hope and support to those seeking refuge but has also demonstrated the transformative power of philanthropy and compassion. His commitment to fostering integration, independence, and belonging has left an indelible mark on Guelph, setting an example for communities and individuals worldwide to follow.



ESTILL'S FOUR PILLARS OF SUCCESS—

- ❶ EMPLOYMENT
- ❷ LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY
- ❸ INTEGRATION
- ❹ GIVING BACK





CODY RUBERTO
 MAKING CITIES ACCESSIBLE

THUNDER BAY, ON



Founder & CEO,
URide



Next Founders,
2022



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/cody-ruberto-a1545150/>

Tell us a little bit about your venture. What big problems are you solving?

People in underserved communities in Canada don't have access to reliable transportation. This is a major issue. We at URide have created a new rideshare model that works in low density areas and small towns. Over time, we will empower underserved communities through this.

We're building local marketplaces that will connect millions of people living in disadvantaged communities with essential services, creating access and opportunity for everyone. By partnering with local drivers who know the area well, URide ensures that the smaller communities in Canada have a dependable transportation option.

What inspired you to start this venture?

I'm from a small town (Thunder Bay) where people used to wait for over an hour for taxis, sometimes in temperatures as low as minus thirty degree celsius. We had no ridesharing, and limited transportation options. People would walk home in these temperatures. Drinking and driving was a huge problem too. I've had friends who have been killed by impaired drivers, and I had one friend who was driving impaired, and killed someone. It's a problem that shouldn't exist, and someone had to do something about it.

What have you accomplished through your work with this venture that you are the most proud of?

In Thunder Bay, people now get picked up in under ten minutes, and a problem that existed for more than thirty years isn't there anymore. We're doing over a million rides a year now across sixteen cities, and still just getting started.

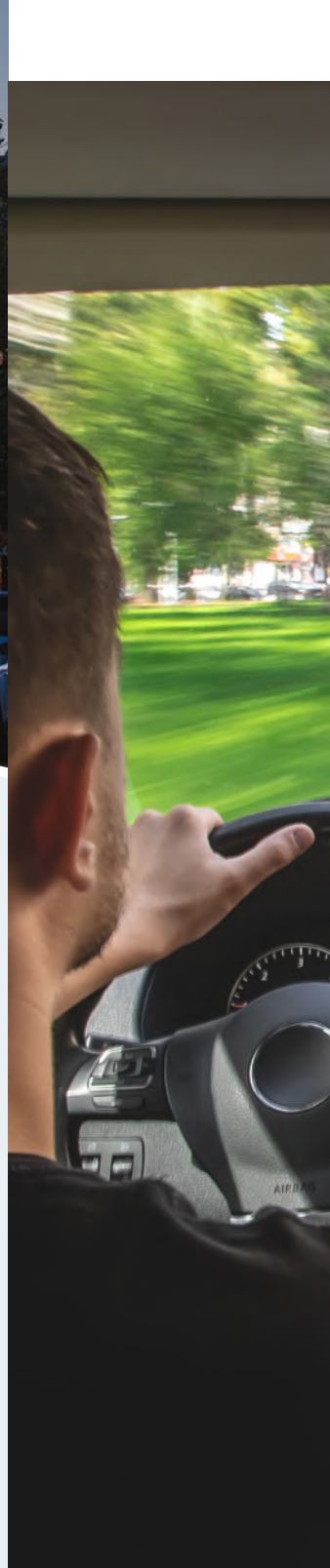
What kind of impact do you hope your work has on communities 10 years from now?

Ten years from now, if you live in a small town you'll have access to everything you need with a click on the URide app. We want to empower millions of local businesses across 18,000 cities around the world.

We also want to inspire over a billion good deeds per year, making the communities we serve happier, more prosperous places to live.

What is one thing you hope folks walk away understanding about the work you're doing?

There are many small towns that have limited to no access to the things we take for granted living in a large city. Everyone deserves access to reliable transportation and essential services. We won't stop until we make it happen!



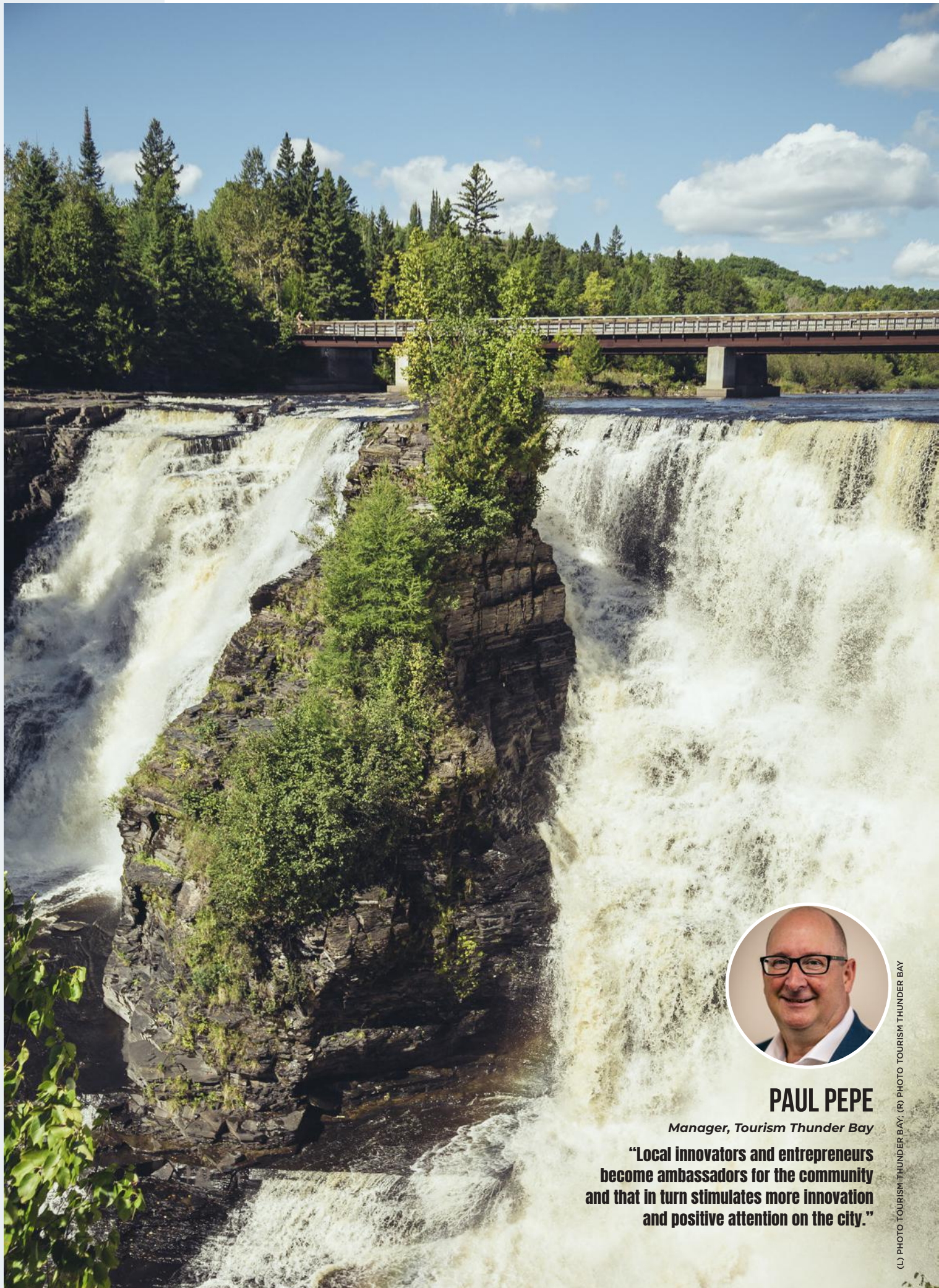
(L) PHOTO TOURISM THUNDER BAY;
 (R) PHOTO BY PVPRODUCTIONS ON FREEPIK



Cruising ALONG THE Bay

IN RECENT YEARS, **THUNDER BAY**, a picturesque city nestled along the shores of Lake Superior, has witnessed a transformation in its transportation landscape, thanks to the emergence of URide, a ride-sharing company founded by NEXT alumnus, Cody Ruberto. This app-based service has not only addressed crucial transportation challenges but has also contributed significantly to the economic vitality of the community.

URide's impact on [Thunder Bay](#) can be described as nothing short of transformative. The city, like many others, faced a shortage of traditional ground transportation capacity. Long wait times and high rates were the norm, resulting in frustration among residents ➔



PAUL PEPE

Manager, Tourism Thunder Bay

“Local innovators and entrepreneurs become ambassadors for the community and that in turn stimulates more innovation and positive attention on the city.”

(L) PHOTO TOURISM THUNDER BAY; (R) PHOTO TOURISM THUNDER BAY



URIDE NOT ONLY PROVIDES FUNCTIONAL BENEFITS BUT ALSO ENHANCES THUNDER BAY'S APPEAL AS A TOURIST DESTINATION.

and visitors alike. URide stepped in with a modern solution, capitalizing on app-based technology to streamline the process of booking rides. The convenience offered by the app, combined with a fleet of modern vehicles, has substantially improved the transportation experience, making it affordable.

The service's success is deeply intertwined with the innovative spirit of founder Cody Ruberto. According to Madeline Dennhardt and Paul Pepe, who are working with the Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC), local businesses like URide play a pivotal role in the growth and sustainability of Thunder Bay's economy. By introducing a homegrown solution that addresses a pressing local challenge, Cody and his team have not only created a thriving business but have also positioned themselves as ambassadors of the city's entrepreneurial potential. Their success has set a precedent for others to follow, encouraging a culture of innovation.

URide's positive impact extends beyond its immediate service offerings. As a locally-founded venture, it serves as a testament to the fact that innovation can thrive even in smaller cities like Thunder Bay. The success of URide and its founder sends a strong message that cities like Thunder Bay can nurture a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs while offering an attractive quality of life and affordability. URide's story resonates with the local community and stimulates further innovation, thereby fostering a cycle of economic growth.

Cody Ruberto's emphasis on partnerships underscores URide's commitment to the community's well-being. Collaborations with local drivers and establishments create a symbiotic relationship, where not only are transportation needs met, but local businesses also benefit from increased customer flow. This interdependence has a cascading effect, contributing to the city's economic resilience.

URide not only provides functional benefits but also enhances Thunder Bay's appeal as a tourist destination. By making transportation more accessible and affordable, URide encourages visitors to explore the city's beauty and attractions. One of the most scenic routes offered by URide takes passengers on a captivating journey, showcasing Prince Arthur's Landing, Hillcrest Park, Terry Fox lookout, Kakabeka Falls, and Anemki Wajiw (Mount Mackay) on Fort William First Nation. This route not only highlights the city's natural beauty but also supports local businesses.

URide's entry into Thunder Bay's transportation landscape has left an indelible mark on the community. Through innovation, dedication, and strategic partnerships, the service has managed to address long-standing transportation challenges, stimulate economic growth, and enhance the city's overall appeal. As Thunder Bay continues to evolve as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, URide stands as a beacon of hope, demonstrating the profound positive impact that a locally-founded venture can have on the economy and quality of life for all residents.



Empowering women by prioritizing equality.

The Scotiabank Women Initiative[®] is a signature program designed to increase economic opportunity for women-led businesses now, and in the future.

For program details, go to scotiabankwomeninitiative.com

Scotiabank
WOM = N
INITIATIVE

RECRUITMENT IS UNDER WAY FOR 2024



“Congratulations to Auky Gonzales and Puja Pachchigar who both won spots in the 2024 cohort of NEXT AI at StartUp Fest in Montréal.”

GEORGE KORKEJIAN

DIRECTOR STARTUPS & MENTORSHIP, NAI

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SAINT-HUBERT, QC

JUSTIN HUNT

MOVING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION



Founder & CEO,
Blaise Transit



Next 36,
2018



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/justinhunt10/>

Tell us a little bit about your venture.

What big problems are you solving?

Blaise Transit is a universal, AI-based software platform that allows any public transit operator to run a variety of on-demand transit services. It addresses the inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of traditional fixed public transit networks. The fixed routes and schedules often prove inefficient during off-peak hours, in areas with variable travel demand, or in small/rural cities. Blaise Pascal's concept of public transit in 1662 initially faced this challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted these issues as agencies struggled to adapt services to reduced demand in 2020.

With Blaise's one-app, 'clicks-not-code' approach, cities can implement a variety of demand-responsive transit services that are adapted to their needs but are offered to residents through the same universal app.

What inspired you to start this venture?

I grew up in the distant suburbs of Montreal in a small city called Saint-Hubert. My family and I relied on public transit to get everywhere. I've spent the majority of my life waiting for buses that never showed up, sitting on empty 40-foot diesel buses while they completed long and unnecessary detours, and planning my days around bus schedules that never really met my needs.


I realized quite quickly that we wanted

to get more people using transit, while decreasing the environmental impact of this industry. We needed to offer higher quality services that were most cost-effective to the transit agencies that run them. That's what drove the initial idea for Blaise.

What kind of impact do you hope your work has on communities 10 years from now? What is one thing you hope folks walk away understanding about the work you're doing?

We launched Blaise in fifteen small and midsize Canadian cities, with twenty-five more set to launch later in 2023. In these cities, we've achieved significant results: doubling ridership, cutting emissions and fuel costs by 40-50%, and introducing transit to previously underserved areas. Our on-demand approach has proven successful, especially in very small cities where fixed bus lines are impractical. By working with these cities, we've expanded transit access and reduced operational expenses. Moreover, we've remained committed to our accessibility values, offering multiple ways to book rides, even without internet or a smartphone. Additionally, we've chosen to focus on public-private partnerships as the most impactful solution to address this societal challenge, despite pressure to exclusively pursue private markets from potential early investors.

(L) PHOTO BY TRAVELSCAPE ON FREEPIK; (R) PHOTO BY FREEPIK

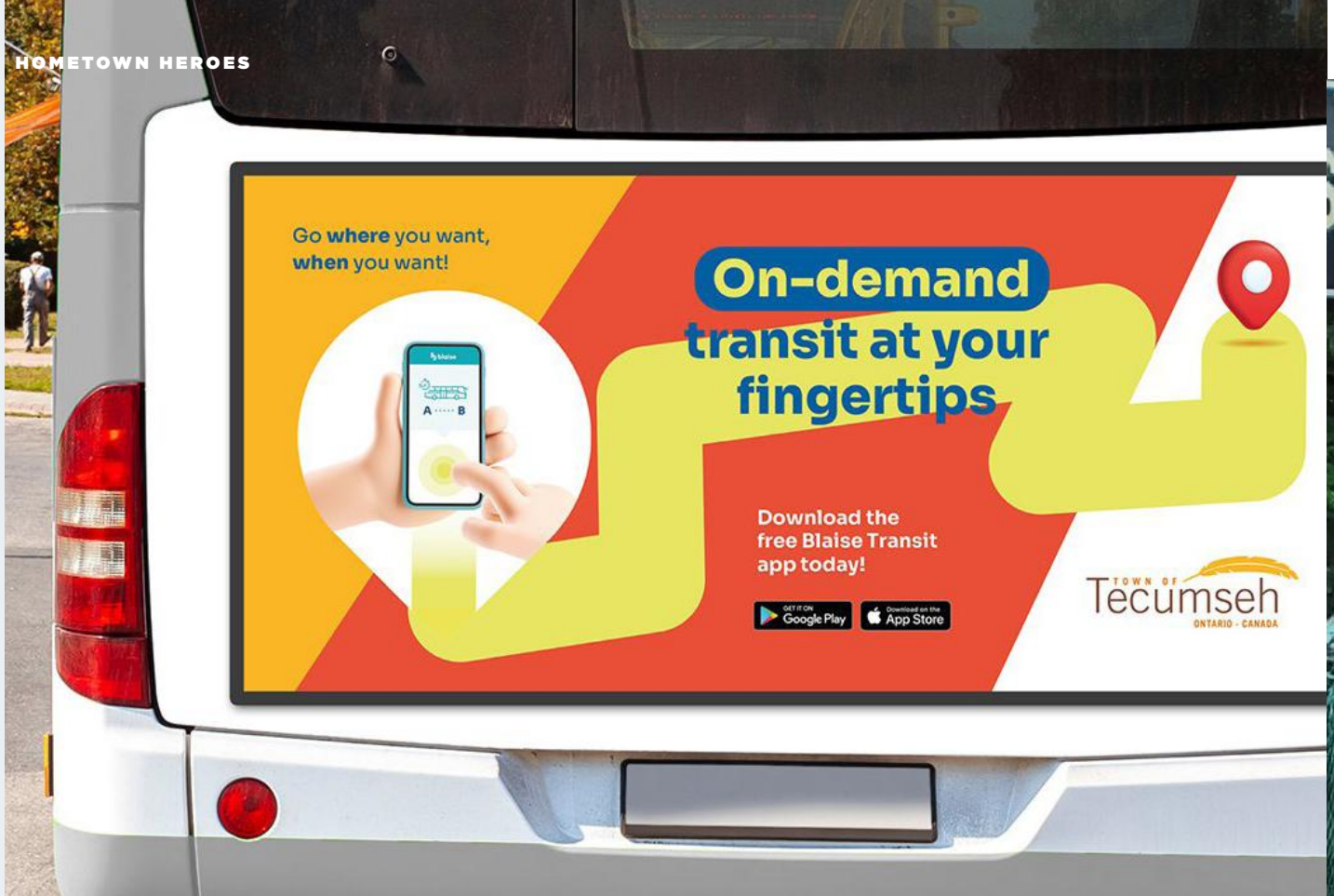
A close-up photograph of a hand holding a yellow transit pole inside a vehicle. The background is blurred, showing the interior of a bus or train with overhead lighting and structural elements.

THE ART OF MODERN

URBAN COMMUTING

FOR THE PAST 3 YEARS, Marieke Tremblay has collaborated with Blaise Transit, offering guidance and mentorship to the company. She has also previously acted as the interim President and Director General of the Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT), helping manage transit service across the Greater Montreal Region. With an extensive experience in the mobility and transportation sector and as a professional coach, she possesses a firsthand understanding of Blaise Transit's challenges, endeavors and opportunities.

Blaise Transit, she believes, addresses a crucial issue that has plagued smaller communities, low-density neighborhoods, and regions with ineffective fixed-route systems. It offers a sustainable mode of transportation tailored to meet the specific needs of citizens. By providing flexible transit schedules, Blaise Transit empowers riders to use public transport more effectively, ensuring they can access it precisely when they need it. This user- ➔



ONE OF BLAISE TRANSIT'S NOTABLE CONTRIBUTIONS IS ITS COMMITMENT TO INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS.

centric approach has not only increased ridership but also optimized transportation services by reducing empty buses, thereby lowering operating costs for transit authorities.

Tremblay says that one of Blaise Transit's notable contributions is its commitment to increasing accessibility and inclusivity for individuals with disabilities or special needs. The platform has worked diligently to ensure that its services are inclusive, making it easier for those with mobility challenges to access public transportation. This dedication to catering to diverse populations reflects Blaise Transit's commitment to creating a more equitable and accommodating transportation system.

Blaise Transit's positive impact on urban areas is undeniable, particularly concerning traffic congestion and sustainable transportation options. Emphasizing public transit as an effective choice to reduce carbon footprints, Blaise Transit encourages citizens to make sustainable travel decisions. By offering a user-friendly app that enables riders and operators to request, manage, and view their rides, the platform fosters a seamless and efficient public transit experience, encouraging people to rely on public transportation more frequently.

As the climate crisis looms large, Tremblay believes public transportation will play an increasingly vital role in addressing environmental concerns. Blaise Transit, she

thinks, recognizes this and has actively taken steps to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, investing in public transportation can significantly decrease the total vehicle-kilometers traveled and, consequently, the associated greenhouse gas emissions, making a considerable impact on combating climate change.

Blaise Transit's journey has been marked by transformative efforts to revolutionize public transportation for a sustainable future. By focusing on the needs of citizens and creating flexible transit schedules, the platform has empowered communities, enhanced accessibility for those with special needs, and reduced traffic congestion in urban areas. Furthermore, its commitment to addressing the climate crisis through public transportation highlights the company's dedication to building a greener and more environmentally responsible world.

Marieke Tremblay is certain that as we look towards the future, companies like Blaise Transit will be instrumental in inspiring positive changes in the realm of public transportation, benefiting both communities and the planet. Through the collective efforts of innovative platforms like Blaise Transit and the commitment of individuals and authorities, she believes we can forge a more sustainable and inclusive path for transportation, ensuring a brighter and cleaner future for generations to come.



MARIEKE TREMBLAY

Advisor/Coach for Blaise Transit

"In smaller communities, low-density neighborhoods or areas where fixed-routes are not effective, Blaise's platform equips riders and transit authorities with flexible schedules."



“BE BOLD, BE BRAVE AND BE YOU,”

**VIRTUAL GURUS FOUNDER
URGES WOMEN TO
BELIEVE THEY CAN DO IT.**

WHEN CALGARY'S BOBBIE RACETTE says that “resilience and passion” are essential for women entrepreneurs, you can believe her.

That's because the founder and CEO of Calgary's Virtual Gurus faced 170 rejections from the male-dominated venture capital sector when she tried to fund her fledgling HR tech firm. Fortunately, as an LGBTQ+, Cree Metis woman, Racette was passionate about building an inclusive virtual talent marketplace for everyone, from single mothers to disabled veterans to transgender persons.

And now, as the first Indigenous woman in Canada to close Series A VC funding – with the support of Roynat Capital, a wholly owned subsidiary of Scotiabank that provides creative financial solutions to mid market companies, Racette advises women to, “Be bold, be brave, and be yourself. If you have all three things, nothing will break through your armour, and you can power through it.”

FROM LAID-OFF TO LIFTING UP OTHERS

Today at the helm of a tech company that has achieved nearly 300 percent year-over-year revenue growth, Racette admits that she never anticipated such success: “I didn't fathom that I would be an entrepreneur, since I left home at 18.” Raised by two hard-working moms – including a Residential School survivor who became Regina's first female house builder – Racette roamed the world before establishing herself as a safety foreman in Calgary's oil and gas industry.

She only decided to start her own company after being laid off from the oil fields and cobbling together an income as a virtual assistant for administrative outsourcing

companies. “The only reason I created Virtual Gurus was to make a job for myself, but I realized that I could build this into a massive platform and give meaningful work-from-home opportunities to others like me,” recalls Racette. “As an LGBT Indigenous woman, everyone would say ‘no’ to me even though my skill set was really good.”

With that inspiration, Racette drafted the Virtual Gurus business model, by which the company finds and trains skilled ‘Virtual Assistants’ across North America and, with its proprietary software, matches them with client companies, ranging from small businesses to large corporations seeking third-party support, from book-keeping and data entry to marketing and customer service. “We prime our Virtual Assistants for success, by helping them create their own home businesses, connecting them with their own clients, and offering them an online community to support each other,” says Racette.

Virtual Gurus' key differentiator is its focus on creating employment for under-represented individuals. Currently, 80 per cent of its all-onshore talent are persons who identify as women. And, among those team-members who identify as male, approximately 60 per cent are Black, Indigenous or persons of colour.

PIVOTING IN THE PANDEMIC

While Virtual Gurus' noble mandate helped Racette grow her business over the past six years, she had to pivot during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many of her B2B clients faced financial uncertainty. “We decided that the most important thing was to keep our Virtual Assistants working even if we had to lose money,” recalls Racette. “We

launched our 'People over Profit' program and gave free Virtual Gurus services to more than 100 start-ups, so they could keep operating without worrying about their back-office support."

The pandemic proved to be an opportune time for Virtual Gurus to target the many companies that had laid off their own admin staff but still needed remote workers to perform those tasks. "We did experience a dip in revenue at first, but once companies realized they needed to keep their businesses going, we grew substantially during that economic downturn. Even today, as many tech companies are struggling, we have an advantage because we provide back-office support that all companies still need," points out Racette.

KNOCKING BOLDLY ON VENTURE CAPITAL DOORS

It shouldn't surprise anyone that Virtual Gurus overcame the pandemic since Racette was seasoned at surmounting crushing challenges. After all, she had spent the previous two years struggling to raise capital to keep her company going and growing.

Racette recalls how she tirelessly pitched her company to investors across North America: "I was turned down 170 times and told that my business was not 'scalable', even though I had so many clients coming to my site, and so much talent applying for work. I turned those criticisms around to put 'fuel on my fire.' I said, 'It's not true, we are scalable. I just needed to build the technology and the team to prove it.'"

Such determination was essential in the face of significant, subtle resistance. In particular, many potential investors doubted that Virtual Gurus could source an adequate talent workforce from under-represented communities. And, the investor community appeared to overlook entrepreneurs who were not white and male.

Recalling how her funding proposals resulted in polite but vague declines, or unreturned messages, Racette observes that, "My greatest challenge was having people believe in me because – when you look at someone like me, an Indigenous LGBT woman – a lot of people don't grasp what we can do. Among those 170 'no's I received, 80 per cent of them were from men. That shows how there's a lot of work to do to diversify the tech community and the investment portfolios that everybody invests in."

Racette's sentiments are backed up by statistics indicating that, while 51 per cent of the Canadian population is female, only 1.9 per cent of venture capital goes to women-led businesses. And, since 2014, only 10 per cent of all Canadian venture capital investment deals involved a female-run company. That trend is noteworthy when you consider that in Alberta alone, 30 per cent of the province's technology start-ups are founded or co-founded by women. In speaking with clients, Scotiabank has learned that Women face unconscious gender bias when trying to build and manage business and there is a resulting gender gap in venture capital funding. For example, a 2020 proprietary study showed when it came to venture capital, women received less than men – 2.3% for women versus 97.7% for men.

Fortunately, Racette persisted, and through word of mouth she heard of Vancouver's Raven Indigenous Capital

Partners (Raven), provided lead support for Virtual Gurus' seed funding round, of roughly \$1 million in 2020.

Racette admits how that funding came at a critical moment: "I was interviewed by a Calgary radio station and one of the listeners was a transgender person whose boss insisted that she come to work dressed as a man. This person couldn't be themselves at work, and feared that she would never be able to be herself. She heard the radio interview of me and instead, she drove straight to Virtual Gurus, cried in my office, and became one of our Virtual Assistants. This incident reminded me why I started the company and that we had to keep going."

FIND BELIEVERS WHO REALLY SEE YOU

Virtual Gurus has continued to rack up believers, business, and investors ever since, and today Racette proudly states that it is the largest virtual assistant platform in Canada, and the fourth largest in the US.

In fact, amid the market uncertainty posed by the pandemic, Virtual Gurus closed its Later Stage Series A VC funding of more than \$7 million in March 2022, to help it expand its technology platform and stretch its services into the US. By doing so, Racette became the first known Indigenous woman in Canada to close a Series A funding round. She credits the support from a variety of eager investors, including The51, a Financial Feminist™ platform where current and aspiring investors provide capital to women and gender-diverse founders.

Racette also praises Roynat Capital for helping Virtual

“I WAS TURNED DOWN 170 TIMES AND TOLD THAT MY BUSINESS WAS NOT ‘SCALABLE’”

Gurus reach its \$10 million funding target: "We looked at a number of major financial institutions to help close our funding round, but we chose Roynat because they actually welcomed the diversity element of our company and our vision of changing people's lives." Today, Roynat and Scotiabank provide Virtual Gurus with steady, flexible lending and business banking support, through a dedicated Technology & Innovation Banking group. "We work hard to structure founder-friendly capital for high potential entrepreneurs like Racette. It's our mission to fuel start-ups with thoughtfully structured capital to support their aspirations. Recognizing the imbalances which exists in Technology and the broader economy regarding access to capital, we are proud to have been chosen to support Bobbie and the team at Virtual Gurus." Says Neelam.

VIRTUAL GURUS IS CURRENTLY IN THE PROCESS OF RAISING SERIES B VC FUNDING OF \$15 MILLION.

Racette notes that conditions are improving for entrepreneurs who are women or who come from diverse backgrounds: "There is much more support than five years ago, so surround yourself with those incubator platforms that have so many resources to help you succeed."

Racette herself mentors aspiring founders at Platform Calgary, a non-profit with connections across Calgary's tech ecosystem: "I tell them that you must be resilient, to push through challenges, but you can do it if you are passionate about your vision."



REGINA, SK



KRISTY EHMAN

TRANSFORMING BUSINESSES AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES



Founder & CEO,
Hyon Software Inc.



Next Founders,
2020



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/hyon/>

Tell us a little bit about your venture.

What big problems are you solving?

Organizations today make capital asset purchase and disposal choices without a framework for decision-making. Hyon helps large organizations embrace the circular economy by making it easy to calculate and compare both the financial and environmental opportunities for asset redistribution, storage, disposal and new purchases. There is an urgent need to reach net-zero and by helping organizations optimize their assets within operations, Hyon will become the new gold standard in asset transparency.

What inspired you to start this venture?

Hyon started out of the need to keep kids' items in circulation, and quickly turned into a company with the mission to advance circular economy in Canada.

What have you accomplished through your work with this venture that you are the most proud of?

Creating awareness around the circular economy to help customers dramatically reduce landfill contributions. The impact of our work in the industry has us on the path to becoming a Certified B Corp. Outside of customer impact, I'm most proud of how our two daughters are learning through their exposure to Hyon – it has created

meaningful conversations around climate, consumerism and what it means to operate a business for good.

What kind of impact do you hope your work has on communities 10 years from now?

Hyon will provide economic benefits to the Canadian market and aims to have a profound impact on communities by promoting the circular economy within large organizations. By providing a decision-making framework, it helps optimize asset usage for financial and environmental benefits, contributing to net-zero goals. The venture started with a focus on keeping kids' items in circulation but expanded its vision to address broader waste and asset management issues. We are proud of raising awareness about the circular economy, reducing landfill waste, and inspiring the next generation to care about climate and sustainability.

What is one thing you hope folks walk away understanding about the work you're doing?

As it relates to climate change – we can't individually do it all, but we can each do something. We hope the folks reading this article are inspired to think about how they can embrace circularity within their organization.



(L) PHOTO BY TOURISM REGINA; (R) PHOTO BY EMMET

LOOPING IN

Sustainability

IN A WORLD THAT'S INCREASINGLY aware of environmental challenges, some businesses are stepping up to make a big difference. Hyon, a Regina-based company, founded by NEXT Alumna, Kristy Ehman, is one such example, making waves in the sustainability and circular economy landscape. Their recent collaboration with [Humber College](#) is changing lives in a small community, emphasizing the community and environmental impact of Hyon's work. ➔



HYON'S STORY IS NOT JUST ABOUT THEIR TOOLS AND SERVICES; IT'S ABOUT THE ROLE SMALL BUSINESSES CAN PLAY IN RESPONDING TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES.

The journey began at the 2022 Collision conference in Toronto, where Humber College and Hyon crossed paths. Suzanne, Information Systems Business Analyst from Humber, recalls that it was an immediate recognition of shared goals that brought them together. For Humber, Hyon's tools seemed intuitive, and the expertise of the Hyon team made it a seamless journey toward project planning and implementation.

While Hyon was headquartered in Regina and Humber in Toronto, location wasn't an issue while deciding upon the collaboration, the primary focus being the value Hyon could bring to the table. Being a Canadian business, it presented an opportunity for a collaborative approach to development and implementation—a chance for Humber College to contribute to the growth of a promising local enterprise.

One of the key aspects that drew Humber College to Hyon was their advocacy for the circular economy. While Humber's current use of Hyon primarily centers around reuse and asset tracking, the bigger picture includes building an open community marketplace to rehome excess assets. This move is aligned with the principles of a circular economy, reducing waste and promoting sustainable resource management.

For Humber College, the experience of working with

Hyon has gone beyond just a business partnership. It has sparked meaningful conversations around reuse and the circular economy. Project managers within the Humber teams are finding it more intuitive to align their decisions with sustainability goals. This newfound perspective promises to support the achievement of structured department sustainability goals in the future.

Hyon's story is not just about their tools and services; it's about the role small businesses can play in responding to environmental challenges. Their nimbleness and adaptability are assets in a world where sustainability goals are evolving rapidly. The one-on-one support and learning opportunities that Hyon provides have benefited both sides, strengthening the partnership between Humber College and Hyon.

In conclusion, Hyon's work with Humber College is a testament to the positive impact small businesses can have on their communities and the environment. By fostering collaboration, promoting reuse, and championing the circular economy, Hyon is not just a tool but a catalyst for change. As we continue to face pressing environmental challenges, it's clear that businesses like Hyon are instrumental in our collective journey towards a greener, more sustainable future.



SUZANNE HARDCASTLE

Information Systems Business Analyst , Dept. of Capital Development and Facilities Management, Humber College

“The process of working with Hyon has made the conversations around reuse and the value of circular economies more intuitive for project managers within our teams.”



WHO'S LISTENING TO WHAT

**UNVEILING THE TASTES OF OUR LEADERSHIP
VOLUNTEERS. FROM TIDYING TIPS TO
REAL ESTATE RICHES, OUR VOLUNTEERS
REVEAL CAPTIVATING AUDIO INSPIRATIONS
AMID THE PODCAST PLETHORA.**



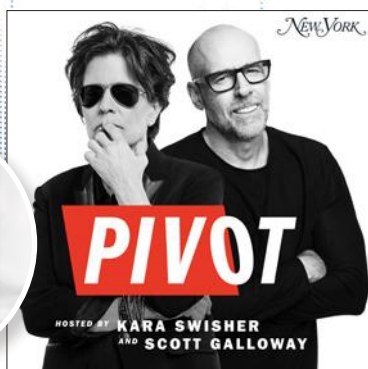
NOEL WEBB – MENTOR

The **Connected Intelligence** podcast, hosted by Sonia Sennik, offers listeners a unique blend of technical insights and interpersonal dynamics in the world of work. With its holistic approach and expert guests, the podcast is a crucial resource for understanding both the hard and soft facets of what we “bring to work that aren’t actually about the work”.



JANICE SOUSA – MENTOR

Podcast recommendation - **Positioning with April Dunford**. April is the foremost expert on Positioning, a topic I’ve always found hard to decipher as a Founder. She breaks it down for Founders and how to incorporate and consider it. She also brings thoughtful experts on her new podcast highlighting how positioning interacts with every part of the business.



PETER CARRESCIA – INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Pivot, a podcast hosted by tech journalist Kara Swisher and NYU Professor Scott Galloway, is a good way to keep abreast of what’s new in the world of tech, business, and politics. The hosts make predictions, engage in debates, and offer a unique blend of expertise. If you’re keen on staying informed, this podcast is a real treat.



MICHELLE MCBANE – INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

SmartLess, hosted by Jason Bateman, Sean Hayes, & Will Arnett, is a podcast that beautifully bridges diverse life paths through genuine conversations and natural humor. Each episode features one host surprising the others with a mystery guest, leading to spontaneous, laughter-filled, and enlightening discussions.



GEOFF WADHAM – MENTOR

Lex Fridman’s Podcasts always have thought provoking conversations with diverse expert guests that offer a unique opportunity for learning, expanding knowledge and gaining insights into various aspects of human existence and the world around us.



LILY LIAO – MENTOR

I enjoy the in-depth research and long form storytelling of companies that are household names. It’s great for a morning commute or an after-work long run!

Acquired podcast was also recommended by Noel Webb.

COMMUNITY NEWS

NEXT CANADA COMMUNITY MAKING HEADLINES

B

BRIDGIT RAISES USD 7 MILLION

Lauren Lake and Mallorie Brodie continue to break barriers in construction industry.

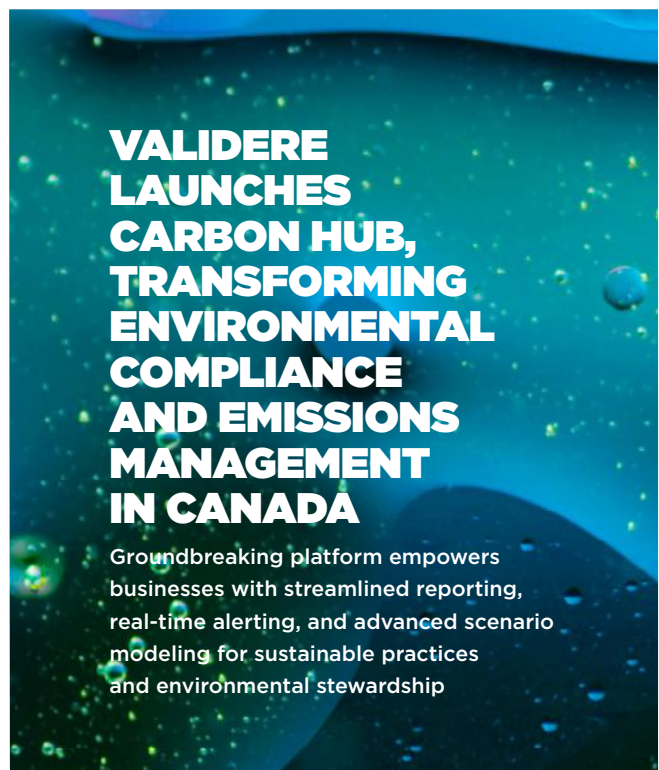


FLASHFOOD GOES FROM REFUSE TO RESCUE



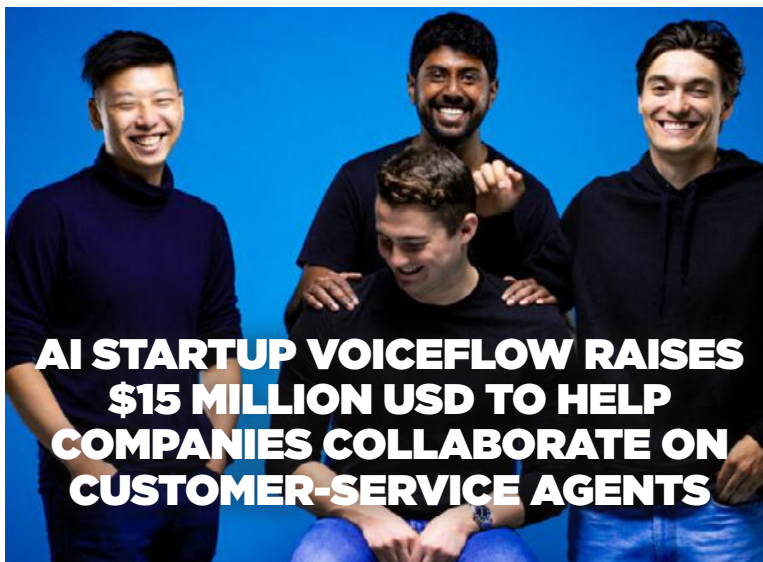
PARTAKE BREWING GROWS NONALCOHOLIC CRAFT VARIETIES

A medical diagnosis led man to found non-alcoholic beer company that's now selling close to \$20 million in annual revenue.

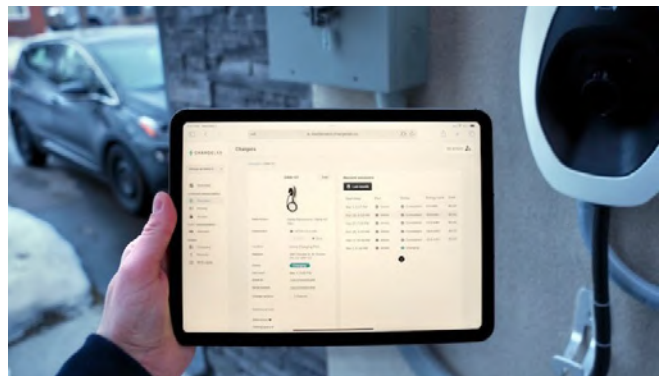


VALIDERE LAUNCHES CARBON HUB, TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND EMISSIONS MANAGEMENT IN CANADA

Groundbreaking platform empowers businesses with streamlined reporting, real-time alerting, and advanced scenario modeling for sustainable practices and environmental stewardship



AI STARTUP VOICEFLOW RAISES \$15 MILLION USD TO HELP COMPANIES COLLABORATE ON CUSTOMER-SERVICE AGENTS



CHARGELAB SECURES \$15 MILLION, COMMERCIAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH ELECTRIC VEHICLE COMPANIES TO EXPAND US PRESENCE

CONQUEST PLANNING PARTNERS WITH CAPINTEL TO BRING AI-POWERED ADVICE TO MORE FINANCIAL ADVISORS AND INVESTORS



SEAL SHIELD ACQUIRES CLEANSLATE UV, EXPANDING LEADERSHIP IN ULTRAVIOLET (UV-C) SANITIZATION MARKET



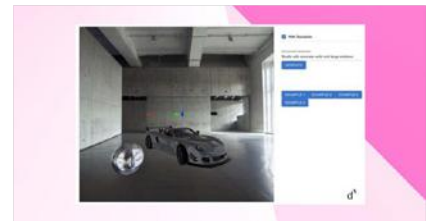
KLIR UNVEILS REVOLUTIONARY CHATGPT INTEGRATION POWERED BY MICROSOFT AZURE'S OPENAI SERVICE FOR ITS UNIFIED WATER MANAGEMENT PLATFORM



REVOLUTIONIZING WORKPLACE SERVICES: THRIVER INTRODUCES AI CHATBOT FOR ENHANCED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



SAMPLER ACQUIRES ADMASS TO BRING AI AND USER-GENERATED CONTENT TO ITS PRODUCT SAMPLING PLATFORM



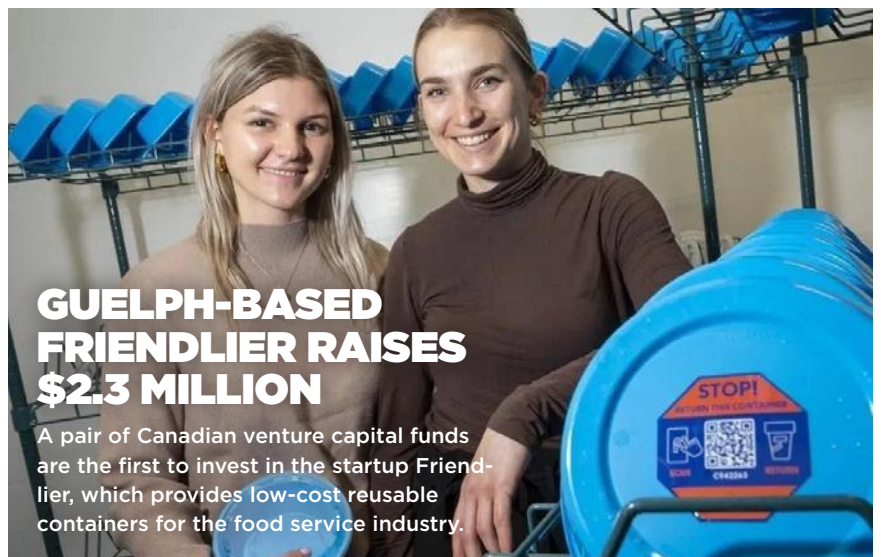
DEPIX OFFER AI GENERATED HDR BACKGROUNDS FOR INFINITE RENDER STYLES

SHAKEPAY INC. BECOMES THE FIRST QUEBEC-BASED CRYPTO ASSET TRADING PLATFORM TO BE REGISTERED AS A RESTRICTED DEALER IN CANADALIST FOR 2023



GUELPH-BASED FRIENDLIER RAISES \$2.3 MILLION

A pair of Canadian venture capital funds are the first to invest in the startup Friendlier, which provides low-cost reusable containers for the food service industry.





ALEXANDRA MCGREGOR

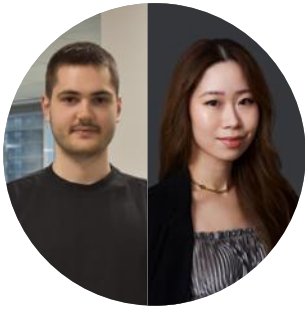
*Chief Programs Officer,
NEXT Canada*

THESE TEN VENTURES distinguished themselves during our summer programming, so much so that they were invited to pitch before an all star NEXT alumni panel at Venture Day in Toronto. Keep an eye out for these talented new alumni.



VENTURES TO WATCH

PHOTO BY FX PRODUCTIONS CANADA INC.



CAN UNCU, EUNICE WU

ASEPHA is an AI enabled point of care reference tool. They help healthcare professionals navigate through over 35 million documents within seconds, enabling them to provide more efficient care.



NELSON LEE

HAVEN is an end-to-end platform designed to fortify community safety by seamlessly linking users, institutions, and first responders in real-time.



RENA NAKAJIMA, GAURAV RANGANATH

PLANNI is a B2B SaaS tool to streamline financial forecasting for real estate developers.



SHUBH MITTAL

SELESTE is making smart glasses to help blind people read text, find objects, navigate their environment and more to give them back their independence.

NEXTAI



JENNIFER SCHELL, ROB GRZESIK

FINLITI helps investment brokerages increase revenues by retaining and engaging retail investors, empowering them with tools to make better investment decisions.



DANIEL LOZANO, TIM SEABROOK, NICOLE YELSEY

KINDWORKS.AI is an enterprise platform designed to ignite more connected, purposeful, and high-performing workplace cultures through the practice of Kindness.



NABIL TAYEB, VINCENT TERRASI

DRAFT&GOAL offers a turnkey solution for generative ai integration in enterprises. Draft&Goal's solution empowers enterprises to harness AI's transformative potential while safeguarding their data and integrating with their current operations.

NEXTFOUNDERS



CRISTEN PHIPPS, ABDEL TAHIR

HANDID is revolutionizing the home renovations industry by developing the systems level technology to centralize handyman services on a global scale. Providing clients with simplicity, speed, and efficiency in booking a handyman and having their work completed. The world's simplest way to book a handyman.



JONATHAN DIPASQUALE, ERIC NEWCOMBE

INSTANT RISK COVERAGE (IRC) is a digitally enabled insurance service. They are making it easier for Venue owners and their Renters to access fair and affordable insurance all within seconds.



ROHAN KUMAR

THE DO MORE COMPANY is on a mission to become the largest manufacturer, distributor and marketer of functional foods globally. Functional foods, also known as nutraceuticals, are foods that contain health-giving additives and/or have medicinal benefits that address common health concerns.



GRIT

Is this Sustainable?

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NEXTCANADA

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NEXT Canada's mission is to build a more prosperous and competitive Canada. We offer mentorship, education and community to aspiring entrepreneurs across four programs (Next 36, Next AI, Next Founders and Next Alumni).

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