

CHANGE Inc. Toolkit

Cultivating Young Social Entrepreneurs

MAY 2012

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As this toolkit was enriched by the inclusion of first-hand experiences and real-life lessons, we would especially like to express our sincere gratitude to all the workshop speakers and questionnaire respondents who took the time to share their passion and perspectives with aspiring young social entrepreneurs.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our project partner, TIG, for their collaboration throughout this project. Their valuable input further enhanced this toolkit, which we believe will not only serve as a useful guide for young social entrepreneurs, but also inform future efforts to advance social entrepreneurship across Ontario.

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## Our Partners

Project Partner:



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Conversation. Collaboration. Change.

## Introduction

In the face of growing economic, social and environmental challenges, more Canadians are not only turning to entrepreneurship as a way to earn a living, but many are also exploring opportunities to make a positive impact as an entrepreneur.

Social entrepreneurs typically use business practices to address social and environmental issues. As social entrepreneurship is occupying an increasingly significant place in Ontario's economy, addressing the gaps in learning and application can enable youth to build on this emerging trend. While traditional entrepreneurship programming for high school and post-secondary students is growing, there is relatively limited hands-on training for youth interested in becoming social entrepreneurs.

With lead support from the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation (formerly Ministry of Economic Development and Trade), [Canada's Public Policy Forum](#) and [TakingITGlobal](#) (TIG) launched [\*Change Inc.: Cultivating Youth Social Entrepreneurs\*](#), an initiative focused on expanding and strengthening youth social entrepreneurship in Ontario by providing learning, skill building, and mentoring opportunities to youth aged 16 to 25.

Responding to the lack of support for aspiring young social entrepreneurs, the Forum and TIG started Change Inc. in September 2011 to inspire and facilitate youth social entrepreneurship across Ontario. Change Inc. involved interactive learning experiences, skills development, group projects, dialogue, idea exchange and e-mentorship between aspiring and established social entrepreneurs.

The first phase included workshops for college and university students in Ottawa, Waterloo, Thunder Bay, Hamilton, and Sault Ste. Marie. At each workshop, students participated in skill building activities and exercises, gained insights from business and community leaders, explored social entrepreneurship models, and learned from experienced social entrepreneurs. High school students across Ontario were also invited to participate in a 12-week facilitated e-course on essential skills for social entrepreneurship, including team building, project management, communications, and using technology to turn ideas into action.

Following the first phase of the project, the Forum and TIG selected promising workshop and e-course participants to participate in an e-mentoring program. Using a youth-mentoring-youth model, the program provided tools and coaching to attract funding and develop initiatives, insights and strategies for accelerating initiatives, as well as support from like-minded young social innovators.

As a guide for aspiring young social entrepreneurs, this toolkit captures the key issues and lessons that were shared throughout the project and the first-hand experiences of young social entrepreneurs across Ontario. To better understand the challenges and opportunities in social entrepreneurship, a diversity of young social entrepreneurs across Ontario were surveyed on the following questions:

- What inspired you to start your social enterprise?
- How do you create social impact with your enterprise?
- What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?
- How do you plan to improve or expand your enterprise in the next few years?

- In your opinion, where are the greatest gaps and opportunities in Ontario's social enterprise sector?

With the growth of online information on social entrepreneurship, this toolkit is intended to complement existing resources by highlighting the key challenges and success factors identified by young social entrepreneurs. Included in the appendices are diverse profiles of emerging and established social entrepreneurs across Ontario and a directory of useful links as a starting point for youth interested in social entrepreneurship, rather than an exhaustive inventory of available support.

## **Background**

Given the current economic context, Canadians are faced with the challenge of addressing increasingly complex social and environmental issues with fewer resources and support channels. Under such circumstances, innovative thinking is needed at all levels to explore non-traditional avenues and turn obstacles into opportunities. Social entrepreneurship is an example of innovation as more Canadians are not only turning to self-employment in a competitive job market, but many are also starting to realize the potential to earn a living from making a positive impact in their community.

### **What is social entrepreneurship?**

Social entrepreneurship can mean different things depending on who you ask. Some will restrict the term to nonprofits or businesses run by nonprofits while others would broaden the definition to include for-profits with a social purpose. Adding to the confusion is the range of terminology for social entrepreneurship and the tendency to use them interchangeably. For instance, social enterprise, social venture, and social purpose business have all been used in relation to social entrepreneurship despite emerging efforts to differentiate the terms for research and funding purposes.

While social ventures typically include both nonprofit and for-profit models, social enterprises are usually limited to revenue-generating entities owned and operated by a nonprofit organization, and social purpose businesses are frequently described as for-profit entities created to address social issues.<sup>1</sup> These distinctions do exist but for our purposes here, social entrepreneurship will be an inclusive term used to refer to any emerging business approach that focuses on a double bottom line of economic and social returns.<sup>2</sup> In other words, nonprofit organizations that borrow businesses management strategies to achieve social or environmental goals more efficiently and businesses that profit from providing services or products that make a positive social or environmental impact.

### **Why is social entrepreneurship important?**

Based on Change Inc. workshop discussions and questionnaire responses, social entrepreneurship is growing faster than ever before. Social ventures like farmer co-operatives, Goodwill, and the YMCA have a long history of amplifying social impact while utilizing the market; however, there is an emerging interest in the potential of business strategies to address our most pressing social and environmental challenges. In fact, workshop speakers affirmed that a 'blended value' model is the future of business. The growing momentum of social entrepreneurship is a positive trend considering the important role of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.marsdd.com/entrepreneurs-toolkit/articles/being-a-social-entrepreneur>

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Baldwin. "Creativity, Social Benefit and Job Creation: The Potential for Social Entrepreneurship in Ontario," Working Paper Series: Ontario in the Creative Age, Feb 2009, retrieved from: [http://martinprosperity.org/media/pdfs/Creativity\\_Social\\_Benefit\\_and\\_Job\\_Creation-A\\_Baldwin.pdf](http://martinprosperity.org/media/pdfs/Creativity_Social_Benefit_and_Job_Creation-A_Baldwin.pdf)

entrepreneurship in our economy and the creative and sustainable solutions to social and environmental problems being developed by social entrepreneurs.

Although the economic value of social entrepreneurship is difficult to measure given lack of consensus on definitions, entrepreneurship, more broadly, plays a strong role in the Canadian economy. According to Industry Canada statistics, small enterprises make up 98 percent of all businesses in the country and employ close to half of the total workforce in the private sector.<sup>3</sup> Small businesses contribute just over 30 percent to Canada's GDP and make up about a quarter of the country's total value of exports.<sup>4</sup>

As demonstrated by the data on employment, entrepreneurship, in all forms, creates economic value through job creation. In particular, social entrepreneurs contribute economic value by expanding employment opportunities to economically disadvantaged regions or individuals and, as a consequence, reducing the cost of government programs aimed at vulnerable communities or demographic groups.<sup>5</sup>

Besides serving as a community economic development tool, social entrepreneurship creates a broader culture of social responsibility and social entrepreneurs make an impact everyday through targeted employment and engagement practices, and by providing services and products that address a social or environmental need.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, greater impact can be achieved by supporting promising social entrepreneurs and successful social ventures to scale innovation.<sup>7</sup>

## **So You Want to Be a Social Entrepreneur: Insights from the Field**

Becoming a social entrepreneur, while rewarding and admirable, is certainly not an easy pursuit. Just like starting any kind of business, social entrepreneurship requires a lot of hard work and perseverance to turn a good idea into a viable enterprise. To help aspiring young social entrepreneurs prepare for the challenges to come and appreciate what it takes to succeed, key insights emerging from the Change Inc. workshop, e-course, and e-mentoring discussions are highlighted below, as well as important lessons shared by new and established social entrepreneurs who responded to our questionnaire.

### **Challenges to consider**

From psychological barriers and philosophical positions to limited knowledge and funding constraints, the range of obstacles facing aspiring and established social entrepreneurs are diverse, but also common to the entrepreneurial experience. Some of the key issues emphasized throughout the project and demonstrated in the struggles we observed among the less experienced youth include:

- Overcoming fear and prejudice when you lack experience
- Understanding legal frameworks and business models
- Embracing profit while doing good
- Finding startup funding to test a new idea
- Learning how to run a business

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<sup>3</sup> Industry Canada. Key Small Business Statistics - July 2011, retrieved from: <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/sbrp-rppe.nsf/eng/rd02599.html>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> A. Baldwin. "Creativity, Social Benefit and Job Creation"

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

### ***Overcoming fear and prejudice when you lack experience***

As a young person taking on the huge responsibility of starting a social venture, anxiety is a normal part of the process, especially if you have never been an entrepreneur and lack the financial resources required. As noted by several social entrepreneurs, getting over initial fears is a big challenge, but one that is critical given that any type of entrepreneurship is inherently risky and requires resilience on the part of the entrepreneur.

Ageism is another obstacle facing young social entrepreneurs. While some youth can leverage their limited experience and resources to gain support, others may lack credibility in the eyes of potential mentors and funders due to their inexperience. To address this issue, youth need to seek out opportunities to acquire more work experience and research the viability of their business model. Some participants also mentioned the importance of being honest about your own knowledge and skill gaps. This type of self-awareness will not only help build the capacity required in entrepreneurship, but also demonstrate a level of maturity that could attract interest and support from others.

New social entrepreneurs may be driven by their passion, but to be taken seriously, they have to show that they have done their due diligence when presenting their business idea to potential mentors and funders. This means clearly identifying and communicating your social venture in such a way that indicates a strong understanding of your core business and focus market, including where there is demand, who the potential competitors are, and how you will differentiate your business to add value.

### ***Understanding legal frameworks and business models***

With the various schools of thought and hybrid models emerging in the field of social entrepreneurship, aspiring young social entrepreneurs often struggle to understand the legal frameworks and financial models that set the parameters for social ventures. In fact, some are learning as they go through trial and error, not realizing the difficulty of switching models down the line.

Frequently, new social entrepreneurs are aware of the nonprofit and for-profit options, but they do not fully understand the advantages and disadvantages of different business models. Their lack of knowledge limits their ability to determine what would work best for their particular social venture. Leaving it to other's advice without truly understanding the pros and cons of each model could not only affect the eventual sustainability, but also the overall effectiveness of the social venture. The structure really depends on your target user and whether your target user is also your customer. If this is not the case, then it may be advisable to incorporate as a non-profit, but there are always exceptions to the rule that require further consideration.

### ***Embracing profit while doing good***

Among social entrepreneurs, there is a constant struggle to reconcile the nonprofit/for-profit divide even though social ventures around the world are a mix of for-profit, non-profit, hybrids and co-operatives. Many social entrepreneurs expressed their discomfort with making money from their social venture, noting the impact of traditional thinking around the different roles played by nonprofits and businesses in society. To overcome this outdated mindset, social entrepreneurs need to realize that profits help to ensure the sustainability and support the expansion of social ventures that drive social change.

A number of workshop speakers agreed that the 'reinvestment' argument in support of the nonprofit model is antiquated and that reinvesting profits back into the organization itself doesn't necessarily

equate to creating social change. Many social ventures, especially in Canada, do not intend to expand in revenue or market size as such practice is often associated with traditional business, so social entrepreneurs shy away from growth opportunities and perpetuate the view that social ventures should not seek profit. Contrary to this view, any social venture, if it is to stay relevant, needs to embrace growth and constantly explore new revenue streams and markets.

### ***Finding startup funding to test a new idea***

Another commonly discussed issue among social entrepreneurs is the lack of seed money or funding to start a brand new venture. Due to the risks involved, limited financial support for social ventures led by inexperienced youth is also highlighted in the entrepreneurship discourse. Social entrepreneurs tend to think big only to realize that implementing ambitious concepts requires an incremental approach that may include piloting phases to prove that a concept is actually feasible. But the real dilemma lies in finding pilot funding when many grants are limited to established ventures.

Startup grants are obviously preferable to the riskier option of taking out loans, but the eligibility criteria for relevant grants across sectors make them inaccessible for young start-up organizations. From charitable status and location restrictions to years in operation and organizational details, the conditions placed on startup grants are often disconnected from the realities facing new social entrepreneurs, thereby limiting the uptake and impact of existing funding.<sup>8</sup>

Other funding challenges discussed in the literature include the low amounts for startup grants and the disadvantages of partnerships in the initial stages. Grant dollars for youth are often insufficient even for the startup phase<sup>9</sup>, and many end up having to find additional sources, applying for multiple grants, or bootstrapping to get their venture off the ground. As an alternative to startup grants and loans, inter-organizational partnerships can boost credibility, but they can also mean less freedom and control at the startup phase.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Learning how to run a business***

Once you have gotten over your initial fears, refined your concept, and found sufficient funding to start implementing your idea, the next challenge is learning the operational side of running a real business. While the process is usually not linear, with psychological and logistical barriers surfacing throughout the lifespan of a business, every social entrepreneur needs to develop both hard and soft skills required to run a successful organization.

The key challenge, as mentioned previously, is the need for honest self-assessment of knowledge and skill gaps to move forward. Ensuring that you have a strong business foundation is imperative to long-term success, but it is also important in establishing credibility with potential mentors and funders. While many of the soft skills can be developed along the way, social entrepreneurs must put in the time to understand the operational side of their social venture, including recruitment, marketing, and financial management.

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<sup>8</sup> Kanika Gupta. "Youth Social Entrepreneurship in Canada: Factors influencing the creation of youth-initiated social ventures," ADMN 598 Management Report, University of Victoria, July 2010, retrieved from:

[http://dspace.library.uvic.ca:8080/bitstream/handle/1828/3025/gupta\\_kanika.pdf?sequence=1](http://dspace.library.uvic.ca:8080/bitstream/handle/1828/3025/gupta_kanika.pdf?sequence=1)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

## **What it takes to succeed**

Being prepared for the challenges ahead is critical to success, but equally important is learning what it takes to succeed as a social entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurs who participated in Change Inc. shared many tips and lessons from their own experience of overcoming difficulties along the way. Their first-hand perspectives have also shed light on the type of mindset and approach that facilitates success as a social entrepreneur. Given the personal and professional difficulties often associated with social entrepreneurship, anyone considering this path should keep the following advice in mind:

- Work hard, stay focused, be patient, and accept failure
- Use and build your network
- Understand your market
- Prepare to manage a business
- Build a strong team
- Do more with less

### ***Work hard, stay focused, be patient, and accept failure***

While some would argue that it takes a certain type of personality to become a social entrepreneur, it is also possible to develop the right set of traits by recognizing the qualities that have helped others succeed. According to most social entrepreneurs, there is no magic formula for success. Much like any other challenging endeavour, you must be willing to work hard, stay focused on your goal, and be patient as progress does not happen overnight. Every phase, from starting a social venture to sustaining one, will involve different obstacles and pressures. To persevere through the ups and downs, social entrepreneurs need to believe in their idea and keep the greater goal in mind as they will get back what they put into the social venture.

New social entrepreneurs also need to learn to accept failure as part of the path to success. Too often, first-time social entrepreneurs are bogged down by the fear of failure and are overwhelmed by all the work involved. Although social entrepreneurship may have a steep learning curve, aspiring social entrepreneurs need to appreciate failure as an important lesson and a step towards greater progress. Failure is not a bad thing if we can learn from it and share it so others don't repeat the same mistake. Some social entrepreneurs have even noted that there is a tendency in the social sector to focus solely on success stories and ignore failed undertakings, which causes the community itself to stagnate and miss opportunities for innovation.

### ***Use and build your network***

Many social entrepreneurs owe their success to strong personal and professional networks. In addition to the emotional support provided by personal connections, social entrepreneurs can benefit from the advice, mentoring, and resources that come from professional networks.<sup>11</sup> Social entrepreneurs also emphasized the importance of connecting with other entrepreneurs to develop a strong peer support system that can act as a sounding board, a hub of information, and an incubator for innovation.

Your network is only as limited as your willingness to build new relationships. Building your network can be intimidating for some who are not used to marketing themselves and asking for help; however, most social entrepreneurs have stressed that putting yourself out there is often the quickest way to generate

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

interest in your social venture and find the help you need to get it off the ground.<sup>12</sup> In other words, be open to asking for help and advice as you will often find a wealth of expertise around you. Another added benefit of tapping into your existing network is that you never know who is connected to whom and where those connections can lead.

### ***Understand your market***

To ensure that an idea is worth developing further, aspiring social entrepreneurs need to research the specific context for their social venture concept, which typically involves conducting a landscape analysis of the market and setting up informational interviews with people who have relevant expertise in their area of interest. By taking the time to do this research, you will be able to refine your idea based on existing gaps, current competitors, and emerging trends in the market.

Once your social venture is off the ground, it will be important to continue to stay on top of market trends and listen to customers, who will also serve as effective promoters if they believe in your venture. As change is constant, social entrepreneurs need to be responsive to their market and open to adaptation to stay relevant. If social entrepreneurs are too rigid in their approach, they may not be able to sustain their social venture or seize opportunities to make a greater impact.

### ***Prepare to manage a business***

As there are limited training opportunities for social entrepreneurs, they must be resourceful individuals who take the initiative to teach themselves or find a way to develop the skills needed to run a social venture.<sup>13</sup> Passion drives action but proper management is paramount to success. As noted by several social entrepreneurs, learning the operational side of running an organization is the only way to sustain a social venture. Some of the basic hard skills required include financial and information management, recruiting and training staff, as well as establishing and communicating clear roles and responsibilities. Bringing in advisors can also help guide the organizations direction and provide an ongoing source of mentorship and expertise where the social entrepreneur lacks experience.

Soft skills, including effective leadership and communication, are just as important to long-term success as hard skills. For instance, social entrepreneurs with employees need to learn how to create an organizational culture that is inspiring, productive, and respectful. Another key quality of an effective leader is strong listening skills, which is especially helpful in understanding the needs of the customer. As the head of an organization, social entrepreneurs must also learn to make hard decisions and engage in difficult conversations.

### ***Build a strong team***

While related to strong leadership and management skills, building a strong team is so vital to the success of a social venture that it deserves to be highlighted as a separate point. Commonly noted in traditional business books, the right people are the key to successful organizations across sectors. A strong team, in the social venture context, means people who share the same values and believe in the work of the organization. Some would even argue that the alignment of passion and purpose is more important than actual skills, which can be developed or taught. Others have emphasized the need to consider the balance of skills among staff as each individual brings different strengths and weaknesses.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

Once a good team has been assembled, social entrepreneurs must learn to create an environment that inspires each member to do their best work. As mentioned previously, successful organizations, regardless of size, require a motivating workplace culture, where mutual respect enables the type of idea exchanges that lead to innovation. Given their focus on positive change, social entrepreneurs need to also look beyond a good internal team and ensure that suppliers and other partnerships also share the values of the organization to maintain credibility and expand their impact into the broader community.

#### ***Do more with less***

Considering the lack of startup funding, new social entrepreneurs need to find creative ways to work with less in order to sustain their social venture until there is revenue growth or new sources of funding to expand. Learning to do more with less from the start will teach social entrepreneurs to become more resourceful and practical when faced with fiscal challenges down the road. Rather than seeking outside funding, limiting overhead costs through online options, in-kind support, and volunteer services can also help preserve autonomy and enable the organization to stay true to its mission.

By recognizing that time and dedication to a social venture can compensate for limited funding, some social entrepreneurs have also referred to the wealth of online resources that facilitate skill building in a range of operational areas normally dependent on outside assistance, such as website development, budgeting, bookkeeping, and basic design. Doing as much as possible without relying on paid services also helps to build a stronger appreciation for staff when an organization grows.

## **Advancing Social Entrepreneurship**

To expand opportunities for social entrepreneurship, a combination of public education, startup resources, and multi-sector leadership is needed. With the gaps in training and funding noted by many social entrepreneurs, it is not surprising that much of the research on youth social entrepreneurship has echoed similar recommendations. Building a stronger culture of social entrepreneurship in Ontario will require further efforts to address these issues, with all sectors playing a role.

#### ***Entrepreneurial Education and Supports***

Some social entrepreneurs believe that there is limited public awareness and understanding of social entrepreneurship and the opportunities for social entrepreneurs. Existing resources are not customized to the experience levels or diverse needs of social entrepreneurs. Others have also mentioned that the negative perceptions of the nonprofit sector are often unfairly applied to social entrepreneurship. More effort is needed to educate the public on the value of social entrepreneurship and to provide the necessary supports to aspiring social entrepreneurs. Some of the recommendations from social entrepreneurs include the following:

- More workshops, conferences, tools, and resources are needed, especially supports catered specifically to newcomers and people who speak English as a second language.
- Teach social entrepreneurship in schools as a form of innovation.
- Promote local intergenerational networks that facilitate interactions between new and established social entrepreneurs.

### ***Accessible Startup Grants***

Lack of capital and business experience is a huge barrier for young social entrepreneurs who are just starting out. As noted by a number of social entrepreneurs, the greatest gap seems to be the disconnect between funders' conditions and entrepreneurs' needs. While small business centres and grant/loan programs exist, access can be a challenge due to limited experience, rising demand for services, and student debt. Below are some of the specific ideas put forth by social entrepreneurs to address funding gaps:

- Provide a wider range of streamlined, easily-accessible start-up grants and seed capital to the most promising social entrepreneurs.
- Develop more micro grant programs to help get good ideas off the ground.

The ideas proposed above require collaboration as all sectors have a role to play in supporting social entrepreneurship, whether it is through funding, training, or raising awareness. Leadership from the public and private sector leaders, as well as foundations and community organizations is needed as each sector brings different strengths, expertise, and networks to the table. As more leaders begin to see the value of social entrepreneurship, the increasing engagement will help to expand opportunities for youth interested in social change. Some of the emerging areas for growth in social entrepreneurship across Ontario include services for Aboriginal communities, supports for women and children living in poverty, arts and culture programs, and peer-learning models that leverage the strengths of the community. With the rise in corporate social responsibility and the shift towards the triple bottom line, there will be increasing opportunities to explore new innovations that align with changing expectations.

## **Appendix 1: Profiles across Ontario**

### **Malorie Bertrand – Ottawa**

#### ***Ef Magazine***

Ef Magazine is an online eco-fashion and beauty publication focused on visually demonstrating that sustainable fashion is not only stylish but accessible. The magazine's mission is to encourage more consumers to think mindfully about their fashion and beauty purchases and support eco-designers, buy second-hand/consignment, fair trade, locally made, certified organic, etc.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

I wanted to combine my love of fashion magazines with my values and perform work that I love. If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life.

#### **How do you create social impact with your organization?**

Ef Magazine opens consumers' minds to the importance of taking into consideration the environmental, social and health impact they can have when making fashion and beauty purchases. By doing so, Ef aims to promote an awareness of the who, what, where, when, why and how of production in the industry to encourage positive change.

#### **What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

The biggest challenge of any social entrepreneur is acknowledging that you can make money while being socially conscientious. Many of us feel guilty wanting to make a living out of our social endeavours but this mindset must be replaced with the understanding that earning a living off of a social enterprise is sustainable and will enable you to grow your business to new heights. I had to get over my fear of being successful and learn to own my business. You have to be confident and present a calm, joyful attitude with your colleagues. Establishing strong relationships with other entrepreneurs and building a support network is key. And finally, ask for advice and help, and it will come!

#### **How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

I am focusing on monetizing Ef this year through multiple revenue streams: online advertising, advertising in other publications/media outlets, and workshops. With a revenue stream, I will be able to hire contributors from around the globe, expand web content, sponsor events, and establish Ef as the representative of eco-fashion in Canada.

### **Linda Bruins – Thunder Bay**

#### ***Evergreen A United Neighbourhood***

Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) was a unique learning initiative that explored and assessed approaches to locally-driven neighbourhood revitalization. From 2005 to 2007, ANC was implemented in the cities of Surrey, Regina, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Halifax, which were the cities selected by the local United Ways in consultation with community leaders and stakeholders. At the end of its first two years of operation, ANC in Thunder Bay secured financial support to continue its revitalization efforts in the Simpson-Ogden neighbourhood. The 15-member Simpson-Ogden Neighbourhood Advisory Committee agreed to seek incorporation under the new name "Evergreen: A United Neighbourhood." The nonprofit organization currently operates a community capacity building program.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

I wanted to improve the neighbourhood and expand opportunities for the residents of the Simpson–Ogden area in Thunder Bay.

**How do you create social impact with your organization?**

Evergreen A United Neighbourhood creates a healthy and safe community by having people work together.

**What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

If you are looking to truly learn and grow as an individual, this is an excellent way to do it. Besides increasing your skill set, the community you work for or serve improves as well.

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

We will continue to engage residents and supporters of our project.

## Kelly Burton – Sault Ste. Marie

### **Café Natüra: Whole Food Eatery and Nutraceutical Dispensary**

Café Natüra is a whole food eatery and nutraceutical dispensary created by a group of health care professionals with a passion for healing through whole foods and nutritional, homeopathic and herbal supplements.

**What inspired you to start your social venture?**

Café Natüra was the result of a partnership of health care practitioners with a passion for healing through nutrition and natural supplements. We wanted to offer the public affordable and nutritious food while accommodating a number of food restrictions such as gluten-free, dairy-free and vegan diets, as well as, supplements and self-care products.

**How do you create social impact with your organization?**

Café Natüra is a strong supporter of local agriculture, sustainable farming and ethical environmental practices. We participate whole-heartedly in our community. Outreach and involvement include health and cooking classes, educational talks and workshops, partnerships with local youth organizations and community fundraisers. We support the local art community by showcasing monthly art shows and live music.

**What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

Being a social entrepreneur takes a lot of perseverance. I have found it helpful to deal with one issue at a time while always keeping the greater goal in mind. If you are in business because you are passionate about your product and not because you are financially oriented, be sure to have a financial advisor on your team who can help you monitor your progress. Running a business for pleasure and not profit is a great way to go out of business quickly. Be sure to ask for help. There are many people out there with varying expertise who would be delighted to share their knowledge and experience with you. There will be roadblocks and hard times but keep your head up, one foot in front of the other, and you will find your reward.

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

I plan to improve my business by learning from the mistakes I've made over the last few years. We have a consistent clientele of regulars and we hope to build more of these relationships. There is substantial room for progress in the catering component of our business and we hope to expand this aspect.

## Anshula Chowdhury – Toronto

### **Social Asset Measurements**

Social Asset Measurements (SAM) works with businesses, nonprofits, and the public sector to measure and maximize social impact. We use technology to scale the interdisciplinary Social Return on Investment framework to better understand what impact our clients are creating and how they're achieving it. Rather than just reporting on indicators, SAM applies social metrics that focus on drivers of success so that social organizations can make smarter decisions about where to put their limited resources to optimize social value and create a competitive advantage.

**What inspired you to start your social venture?**

While working at an investment software reporting firm, I felt dissatisfied and began looking for opportunities that involved social value creation. I tried development work, but the unsustainable aspect led me to search for options that combined for-profit and nonprofit models. I was involved in the micro-lending program at Young Social Entrepreneurs of Canada before starting SAM.

**How do you create social impact with your organization?**

SAM is focused on helping clients to increase social value over time using the resources that are available.

**What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

My experience has helped with my professional and personal growth:

- Creating organizational culture that is motivating
- Becoming a good salesperson by listening
- Learning financial accounting (QuickBooks)
- Setting up security and protocols
- Training staff and communicating with clients that lack software knowledge
- Having difficult conversations, especially with those more experienced
- Establishing conditions for involvement
- Bringing in the right advisors

The following are some of the lessons I learned along the way:

- You can listen but you don't have to obey.
- You get back what you put in.
- You are responsible for your decisions.
- Respect is a keystone for creating innovative culture.

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

I plan to target organizations with a lot of reach, such as funding organizations and expand beyond southern Ontario to Quebec, BC, and international markets, including the developing world.

## **Adil Dhalla – Toronto**

### ***My City Lives***

My City Lives is a digital media platform that organizes video content by the location of its creation, producing an innovative and rich form to learn and share stories about space.

**What inspired you to start your social venture?**

Four years ago, I was in Tanzania working for a nonprofit that was focused on technology solutions to improve standards of living and one of my activities was providing weekly open houses to teach youth about computers and the Internet. At each open house, these youth would ask me the same question: "Brother Dil, what's your home like?" To answer their questions, I found that the resources I could share with them were either not accessible (e.g. websites they couldn't read) or came short in presenting the vibrancy of my city and its people (e.g. pictures). The best tool I could use was Google Streetview and literally walk them down streets but still, I found it lacked the critical element of storytelling. I thought to myself, if I could take them one step beyond Streetview and into locations using rich and community driven media, I could change how they learn about my city.

**How do you create social impact with your organization?**

From an educational standpoint, we're using the most compelling media to teach people about space, especially youth, who prefer mediums like video over traditional mediums for learning. More importantly, because anyone can contribute to My City Lives, we're able to empower everyday citizens to play a part in the learning process and surface hyper local stories that are hard to uncover given the demise of local print.

**What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

Indifference is our greatest threat. As a social entrepreneur, most people will commend you for trying to do something good but turning that into action is challenging because inherently, we celebrate and fear change simultaneously. The only solution is tenacity. It's not a lesson in as much as a fast and paramount rule. If you want change, you must be willing to put everything on the line to make it happen - it's beautifully simple.

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

Our platform lives and dies on the participation of our community to contribute content so there's no more important an area for us to focus our efforts both via product development and communications. Specifically, in the coming months, we'll be releasing a major update that will allow users to create unique maps based on subject matter and solicit the community to co-create this map.

**Lauren Friese – Toronto****Talent Egg**

TalentEgg is Canada's leading online career resource for students and recent graduates - helping students figure out what they want to do, where they want to work, and ultimately, providing them with a platform to apply for jobs. Employers that are interested in reaching and recruiting Generation Y leverage our platform for employment branding and recruitment campaigns.

**What inspired you to start your social venture?**

As I approached graduation in 2005, I had absolutely no idea how to make a successful transition from school to work. In order to delay the transition, I applied to grad school and completed my Master's degree at the London School of Economics in England. When I graduated, it was much easier to transition from school to work, and this was in large part because of the amazing online resources available to students there. After working for a year in consulting, I moved back to Canada and started TalentEgg.ca.

**How do you create social impact with your organization?**

Our social mission is to help ease the school-to-work transition for Canada's youth. We also regularly run campaigns with the aim of fighting youth un- and under-employment. While Canada's youth unemployment rate already sits at a shocking 14+%, we believe that the real rate is actually much higher once you take into account students who have chosen to delay entry into the labour market due to the limited availability of jobs, those who have taken on jobs that do not take advantage of their education (the under-employed), etc. We passionately believe that, with the cooperation of employers, passionate thought-leaders like us, students, and government, we can enact change.

**What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

I think that my biggest lesson is that for-profit business and social missions can co-exist. There is the idea out there that nonprofits are the only vehicles for pure social good. But I think that TalentEgg is excellent at enacting social changes in part because we have married our financial goals with our social goals. Every time a new employer signs up with TalentEgg, more students are helped by TalentEgg. We, as a team, feel great about that.

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

Our goal is to continue to launch innovations and products that align with our "win-win-win + social bonus" motto. To expand – we would like to build products that are a win for our clients (employers), our audience (students) and us as a business, with the side bonus of helping reduce youth unemployment.

## **Emma Inns – Ottawa**

### ***Adorit***

I own and run a small retail shop located in the heart of Ottawa's Byward market. The shop is called Adorit and we showcase a collection of unique designers who all practice fair trade ethics and use recycled and organic materials. I also run my own micro-finance programs overseas in Tibet and showcase these goods at Adorit as well.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

I was living and working in Tibet and was so influenced by the people there and their very dire situation. In Tibet, people are being persecuted for being born as a Tibetan. I knew I needed to do something to help and make sure it was going to be a sustainable venture. So I set up micro-finance programs and workshops, and gave the Tibetan villages a market as I was working in tourism. These programs grew as word spread, and after a few years, we grew enough to move to Canada and set up shop.

#### **How do you create social impact with your organization?**

We are setting the ball rolling to create unique one-of-a-kind pieces that are wearable, fun and stylish, as well as being at a reasonable price point. At the same time as selling clothes, we are also selling the message behind why and what we are doing at Adorit.

#### **What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

I have learned a lot and still continue to learn everyday but some of the most important things are never give up and never stop believing in your idea. This is what will keep you alive through the hard times no matter what they are. I have also learned to ask as many questions as possible to those with experience as there is always room for you to learn more, and those around you have an endless supply of knowledge, so you just need to ask to tap into it.

#### **How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

Adorit is always growing - we do more and more events outside the shop every year and we plan on opening another store in the next few years.

## **Nicole Ives-Allison – Ottawa**

### ***Matchless Minds Music***

Matchless Minds is the first international social enterprise record label operating in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. Founded in 2010 as an artist management company, Matchless Minds has since grown into a fully functional boutique record label representing seven folk and rock artists. Matchless Minds prides itself on innovative artist contracts that work to provide artists with the greatest amount of creative control possible, including representation on the company's board of directors. Equally important, Matchless Minds sees itself as a platform for social change, working with community partners to develop and deliver music education and youth empowerment programs in low-income communities and conflict zones around the world.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

I was inspired to start my social enterprise following a number of internship and volunteer experiences with the Causeway social enterprise umbrella in Canada. After years of working in the nonprofit sector, these experiences opened my eyes to another way of creating social impact sustainably without depending on short-term government funding and tightening donor constituencies.

I was also working in the mainstream music industry at the time and was growing disillusioned with the relationships between artists. I knew that there was a way to balance the interests of the artist with marketing and promoting music. Inspired by the spirit of the 1970s independent label, Factory Records and New York label, Family Records, I thought that it was necessary to re-inject a sense of community and artistic integrity while not compromising entirely on commercial success.

### **How do you create social impact with your organization?**

Firstly, we seek to reshape the traditional relationships between artists and record labels to better reflect the needs of non-traditional artists. With a focus on working with artists who would otherwise be neglected even within the independent music industry, we work on offering a strong system of support that allows artists to grow and develop without pressures of commercial potential often associated with artist relationships.

We also seek to use our community and industry profile, along with the profile of our artists, to be active in the communities in which we operate. With a specific focus on ensuring equality of access to music education programs for young people in low-income, working class, and post-conflict communities, we work with community partners to offer in-kind (time, media, website development) support. At an operational level, I am responsible for maintaining a triple bottom line and demonstrating that to our board of directors, which can be summarized in three questions:

1. Are we generating or on the path to generating sustainable revenues that are capable of providing a reasonable standard of living for our employers, fair remuneration for our independent suppliers (artists, bookers, street teams), and, more importantly, supporting the Heart Strings program?
2. Does our artist roster reflect our core company values? Are there artists on our roster who would be unable to find similar levels of support elsewhere? Are our relationships with our artists healthy, fair, and conducive to the creation of exceptional music?
3. Do we consistently use sustainable materials in our production? Where we cannot use sustainable products or processes, have we made efforts to offset our negative environmental impact?

### **What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

Being a young social entrepreneur is extremely difficult. Regardless of the scale of your project, it is not easy. Funding is likely the biggest challenge young social entrepreneurs will face as traditional business development programs and banks see social enterprises, especially those in arts and culture as very risky investments. As a result, bootstrapping, at least among the social entrepreneurs I know, is becoming more common. If the world is not yet prepared to embrace your vision, it doesn't mean that there isn't any hope, all it means is that you have to work harder.

By focusing on how to do as much as possible with limited funding and planning your business roll-out in stages, you'll be amazed at how much can be accomplished. What you lack in financial resources, you can make up for in time and dedication to the project. Given the wealth of online resources - especially iTunes U - there are so many skills that you can develop yourself (website development, budgeting, bookkeeping, basic design). Doing as much as possible on your own early on in the process also gives you a strong appreciation for the hard work of others in your company when you begin to expand.

### **How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

Over the next few years, we are planning on improving and expanding our social impact substantially. When Matchless Minds was conceived, it was envisioned as a way to financially support a nonprofit musical education program tentatively titled Heart Strings, which would work with musicians to help place them in schools and communities offering direct music education opportunities. Heart Strings will work with artists to help them navigate the web of police checks that are required for working with children (and can be costly and confusing to obtain if you do not have an organization supporting you). We will also work with schools and community partners to place artists with them in the community, working hands on every day after school for 6-8 weeks in order to produce a musical product (a concert and/or recording) that will serve as a record of their accomplishments.

By increasing the amount of interaction between artists active in the industry and young people, it is hoped that young people will be inspired to unlock their creative potential and apply it to whatever it is in life that they have a passion for - music, acting, design, cookery, plastering, carpentry. This program will also give artists, including active international touring acts, the guidance and support structure to ensure that the program is successful on all sides.

## Hendrick Jean-Louis – Ottawa

### *TiRenew Recycling*

We are used tire “Haulers” registered in the Ontario Tire Stewardship Program (OTS), which was instituted in September 2009. The Program’s goal is to manage the 13 million used tires generated in Ontario each year by promoting reuse and recycling of the tires. Our role as a Hauler is to collect the tires and transport them to a recycling facility, where they are shredded to begin the recycling process.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

I was excited about the opportunity to participate in resolving a widespread environmental problem. Scrap tires are categorized as waste for a number of reasons and when unmanaged, as was the case prior to the OTS program, they pose serious environmental threats. Consider, for instance, when a stockpile of 12 million tires caught fire in Hagersville, Ontario in the 1990’s and it burned for 17 days. Tires do not decompose, and since they hold water, they attract many infestations.

#### **How do you create social impact with your organization?**

Our role in the program is very important - it is our responsibility to remove the tires from wherever they are generated in a timely manner. Tires that were once thrown into dumpsters or in the middle of a field are now being recycled and turned into higher value end-use products such as track and field surfaces, rubber floor mats in gymnasiums, surfaces in children’s playgrounds, etc. Tires can also be shredded into crumb rubber, which can be mixed in the composite for asphalt pavement.

#### **What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

One of the components of recycling in any industry is “reuse”. A significant number of the tires collected are in reusable condition and can be exported to other markets. By association with other Haulers, we are, at this time, the biggest exporters of used tires in eastern Ontario. Our biggest challenge is keeping up with such rapid growth. My advice to prospective entrepreneurs is to be financially responsible and organized from the beginning as proper financial management is crucial for the business’ growth and survival.

#### **How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

At this time, we are a bigger exporter of tires than we are Haulers; we supply a tire wholesale operation in South Florida called Drick1 Tires. We will begin initiatives to become retailers, selling more to the general public. This will not only increase profitability, but we also hope it will be our introduction to the automotive industry as a major service provider. Drick1 Tires is widely known to be the best supplier of used tires in South Florida and we want this reputation to continue for other services we offer.

## Sarah Khalid – Mississauga

### *Craving Change Mississauga*

Craving Change Mississauga is a nonprofit that is funded by grants and donations; it is technically not a social enterprise yet.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

I had an idea for a community project and found that registering as a nonprofit organization (NPO) had certain benefits. When it came to handling money, we could open up a separate bank account. We could also give donors a sense of confidence and credibility in us. Being registered allowed us to take the work more seriously, helped with branding, and enabled us to keep related projects under one umbrella.

#### **How do you create social impact with your organization?**

Our main goal is to promote food literacy. One way we have done this is by getting residents of the City of Mississauga in private backyards to learn how to grow organic food together. Residents from a variety of demographics have come out and learned with each other, new friendships have formed, and great and

interesting conversations have been had. In this way, there is a strong community-building component, something which is often lacking in the suburbs.

**What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

Having a lot of passion, but lacking know-how in terms of NPO and social enterprise models can be an issue. We're learning as we go through trial and error (i.e. what projects are manageable realistically, what excites people more, etc.). The other big challenge is volunteer management (haven't quite figured how to retain volunteer commitment in the long-run) and working with nature's cycles when it comes to growing food (organic gardening can be very time sensitive and sometimes the weather and people's schedules don't co-operate!).

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

I am excited by the challenges of being an entrepreneur, and more importantly, offering a service that can benefit the community. These opportunities have inspired me to consider the social enterprise model, however, we have not gone down that route yet as we are still building capacity and testing ideas.

## Saumya Krishna – Toronto

### *Youth Social Innovation Capital Fund*

The Youth Social Innovation Capital Fund (YSI-CF) is championing the next generation of world changers. We provide young social entrepreneurs with microloans as well as the mentorship, connections and business education to effectively implement their socially and financially viable ideas. At the same time, we offer both individual and institutional investors an investment program that provides a social, environmental and financial return. We treat each investment in a venture as a live case study to identify drivers of success for youth and we use social metrics to measure the impact created by these young innovators.

**What inspired you to start your social venture?**

Youth have many ideas on how to address challenges within their communities. However, without the collateral, credit history and work experience to access traditional investment models, young entrepreneurs often face significant barriers in obtaining financing. This social enterprise was founded with the goal of creating new investment models that increase access to capital for youth and also provide investors with both a social and financial return on investment.

On a personal level, I was driven by creating an impact. Social entrepreneurship is a powerful vehicle for creating and delivering a service of value. Moreover, entrepreneurship brings an element of freedom and self-direction that is difficult to find in many other work environments.

**How do you create social impact with your organization?**

The Youth Social Innovation Capital Fund is trying to redefine "investing" by considering the triple bottom line – social, environmental and financial return on investments. Our social impact is created by bridging the gap between investors seeking sustainable investment options and young social entrepreneurs in need of financing. Moreover, as a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering youth, our motives are fundamentally social in nature.

**What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

A great team is essential to successfully develop and execute your vision. In reflecting on my past accomplishments and failures, a key driver of success has always been a strong support network of people who have offered advice, constructive criticism and tremendous moral support. In building a team, surround yourself with good people who share your values and passion, and make sure to create an environment in which they can do their best work.

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

As the social finance sector in Canada continues to grow, the Youth Social Innovation Capital Fund hopes to become a peer leader in youth financing. We plan to develop sophisticated and secure investment options that

engage everyday people. At the same time, we hope to grow in scale to deliver financing options to youth across the country.

## Tinashe Mafukidze – Toronto

### [immigrantyouth.org](http://immigrantyouth.org)

immigrantyouth.org's mission is to promote the advancement and engagement of young immigrants between the ages of 16 and 30 in Canada and around the world. We use online and digital technology to provide access to opportunities, resources and meaningful connections for young immigrants to become empowered socially, educationally and economically while facilitating platforms for them to learn, engage, and collaborate in developing their communities.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

My first hand experiences as a young refugee and immigrant inspired the idea, as well as my desire to drive change in the communities around me.

#### **How do you create social impact with your organization?**

I try to inspire, mentor and provide resources to young refugees and immigrants with the hopes of alleviating barriers they may face during their settlement and integration process. The goal is to:

- Connect people & meaningful opportunities
- Cultivate skills & leadership
- Collaborate on social change
- Celebrate successes

#### **What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

I've learned about the importance of establishing a clear organizational structure from the get-go but also some of the limitations that may come with it. Fitting into funding moulds for grants can be a challenge, especially during the early stages of the project because I didn't have the organizational structure piece pegged. A great lesson has been to always find creative ways of getting your project needs met (especially when you don't have the traditional formal structures) through such options as in-kind donations and creating meaningful volunteer opportunities.

#### **How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

I will improve and expand my social venture by solidifying the organizational structure, collaborating on more events in the community, and setting up 2 new programs.

## Katrina Marsh – Ottawa

### [Apartment613](http://Apartment613.com)

Apartment613 Community Initiatives is a group dedicated to promoting knowledge of and community participation in the arts, urban issues, municipal politics and small business in the Ottawa area. Our main business is a website that promotes local events and issues to an average weekly readership of over 7,000 individuals in the national capital region and beyond. We have also built up a substantial following on social media, with over 7,000 followers on twitter and 1,000 likes on facebook. The website features an event calendar focusing on grassroots and community arts, culture and urban affairs events, as well as profiles of artists and businesses around town.

Aside from the website, Apartment613 runs a number of events to support the site and further our mission. For example, we have run short story and t-shirt design contests, the Fully Fringed initiative to review every single Fringe play at the Ottawa festival, and a mayoral campaign leveraging social media to engage youth. Last year, we

launched the Support Local Campaign to connect local artists and small business through a series of innovative events.

**What inspired you to start your social venture?**

The core Apartment613 team noticed a gap in the Ottawa arts scene. While there were many cool and interesting events being put on by amateur, semi-professional and professional groups, often people didn't know they were happening since there wasn't a reliable source for that type of information. This gap inspired us to try and do something about it. Inspired by other online publications like BlogTO and local weeklies like the Coast in Halifax, we launched the first version of the site in January 2009.

**How do you create social impact with your organization?**

Our biggest impact is through building audiences for local arts and culture enterprises by informing people about events and happenings. Our events calendar, which is focused on smaller events promoted by organizers that have small or non-existent marketing budgets, is a key part of how we make that happen. We have also helped to change perceptions of Ottawa as a 'boring government town' to a place with a very fun and active grassroots arts and culture scene. We believe this has helped connect Ottawans to their community and increase civic pride and engagement.

**What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

*Start with a great team* – Assembling the right team can make or break your enterprise. There is a lot of work associated with starting something like Apartment613 and none of us could have done it alone. With a core team of around 7, we were able to draw on individual strengths and compensate for individual weaknesses. For example, some of us have great ideas, but are not so good at follow through and rely on the help of more responsible members. Some are great at reaching out to contributors, while others focus more on building partnerships with other community groups to expand our network.

*Be light on resources* – For us, the internet has meant that we can get most of our key inputs for free or nominal sums, and we rely on a large team of volunteers for everything from web content to tech support. This means that our overhead is extremely low and we can basically survive with very little money. While there are disadvantages to this approach, it also means that we are not subject to the whims of granting bodies or advertisers. Being sure to grow only as fast as your revenues or else maximizing what you can get for free is one way to ensure sustainability.

*Be sure there is a 'market' for your idea* – The number one reason Apartment613 has been successful is that people in Ottawa were really looking for someplace where they could find out about a wide range of events happening around town. When we started, there was a real gap in that area although, since that time, other sites have sprung up, such as Open File Ottawa or Local Tourist. Initially, we did our due diligence to see if there was already someone out there trying to fill the gap we perceived – if that had been the case, we would have either joined them or done something other than a website. Take some time to look around to understand the ecosystem you'll be operating in, and try to fill a niche that is being under-served.

*Just do it!* - We never really worried about knowing what we were doing (our first site was developed by a lawyer). Half of us barely knew what a blog was, and most of us didn't consider ourselves journalists before we started. We got our first site up three months after we first had the idea and just kept learning by doing. We make a ton of mistakes but try to learn from them as we go. Some planning is good, but at some point, you just have to make that leap!

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

We really hope to build revenues to the point where we can hire a part-time or full-time staff member. We hope to grow our volunteer base and become more innovative in the ways we cover events and people around Ottawa. In particular, we hope to expand the Support Local Campaign to become a much bigger and better-known event.

## **Liam Mooney – Ottawa**

### ***City Crops***

City Crops is an urban farm in Ottawa that partners with home owners to build vegetable gardens in their yards. Partners receive up to 1/4 of our yield while the rest is sold in markets around the city. We grow heirloom vegetables and herbs.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

A growing concern over energy, consumption, climate change and food inspired me to start City Crops. I wanted to bring food, feed into the local economy, help city dwellers re-imagine the urban landscape, increase an ever shrinking bio-diversity in our food supply. Through this social venture, I am able to become self-sufficient and to show people that there is a better way.

#### **How do you create social impact with your organization?**

We provide volunteer opportunities, food to the less fortunate, partner with many other organizations in the community, host workshops and knowledge transfer/barter sessions and increase awareness around climate change, industrial agriculture and the impact of small bio-diversity in our crops.

#### **What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

Start small. Have a reliable partner. Look for mentors. Don't expect to make any money in the first year. Take criticism, but don't listen to nay-sayers, stay positive, be action oriented and prove to yourself, above all others, that you can do it and that social enterprise is a kind of enterprise worth pursuing. Also know that you are a role model for the model itself. Be a good ambassador, do good and good will come back, in some way.

#### **How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

We plan to tighten cost control, focus on pricing of our vegetables, and explore ways to scale our model, whether by franchising, canning, or some other method. We are also looking to centralize our farms in the city, creating density and cutting down on travel time to each of our farms.

## **Besma Soltan - Toronto**

### ***SPEAKout***

SPEAKout aims to inspire, entertain and educate through the art of spoken word. It has been in existence for 3 years, holding spoken word slams. Beginning in fall 2012, we will launch a program for the development of confidence, communication and community skills among children through the art of spoken word, along with bi-monthly workshops.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

We wanted to create a platform that welcomes everyone while inspiring respect, entertaining with a purpose, and connecting the community. SPEAKout seeks to inspire its community with values that advocate for people's betterment and stress the respect of self and others.

#### **How do you create social impact with your organization?**

The topics presented in SPEAKout are thought provoking and inspiring to create change in the community. We aim to bring benefit to larger communities through the messages spread in our events and organizing social good activities with those around us.

#### **What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

It takes a lot of hard work, patience, and drive to turn ideas into action but the end cause and impact is totally worth it!

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

We are moving from an event based to a program based organization, where we integrate educational aspects to what we do and regular programming for adults to allow the inspiration from the events to be taken to the next level with a close-knit community.

**Ash Yoon – Toronto**

**Toronto Acupuncture Studio**

Toronto Acupuncture Studio (TAS) is a community acupuncture clinic that offers high quality treatments at a rate that most people can afford. We charge a sliding scale of \$15-35 per treatment and each visitor decides how much they can afford.

**What inspired you to start your social venture?**

I started TAS because I was uncomfortable charging market rates for acupuncture (which range anywhere from \$55-\$125), which I myself could not afford. Acupuncture needs to be done frequently to be most effective and I wanted my patients to get better and stay better. I realized no one would give me the job that I wanted, so instead of waiting, I decided to look for another way.

Through the course of my search, I came across People's Organization of Community Acupuncture (POCA). POCA is a multi-stakeholder cooperative, where, among other things, acupuncturists help each other set up more affordable, accessible community clinics. This discovery was a huge "ah-ha!" moment for me and I have not looked back since.

**How do you create social impact with your organization?**

TAS provides a service that is accessible to most people. There is a huge socio-economic and ethno-racial range of clientele for our services. We get artists, doctors, construction workers, academics, teachers, nurses, social workers, etc. Our community includes people struggling with precarious housing, underemployment, addictions, and mental health issues. It's a beautiful thing that everyone can come to get treated in one space, together. My colleague has likened community acupuncture clinics as a 'third space' and I agree because people experience it this way.

**What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

One of my biggest challenges was breaking through the psychological barrier of fears when I was just starting out. I had no prior experience with entrepreneurship, no mentors (except online colleagues), no business partner, and very little money. So I sought out resources through the business development centre, where I learned the basics of writing a business plan and managing cashflow. I also connected with Canadian Youth Business Foundation, which made it possible for me to get startup loans and connect with a mentor.

Starting a new project is something that starts with an idea, and that idea needs to be chipped away on a daily basis until it's realized. From idea inception to when TAS opened its doors, it took about a year and a half. Looking back, I realized that things happened (breakthroughs, meeting certain benchmarks) when I was ready for them. For example, TAS had some media coverage lately that brought in a lot of new patients. Had that happened any earlier, we would have been completely overwhelmed. Having matured and stabilized the studio a bit, we were equipped to deal with the new influx of visitors. So the lesson is being patient while preparing for opportunities.

**How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

One of our goals is to create sustainable, living-wage jobs for acupuncturists and studio staff. I would also love to open a second location somewhere in the Greater Toronto Area.

## **Sean Zister – Waterloo**

### ***Seven Shores Urban Market & Café***

Seven Shores Urban Market sells products from local and international producers who have been paid fair prices. Products include produce, baked goods, preserves, coffee, tea, art, fashion, etc. from 30+ small independent businesses. The Café provides healthy lifestyle choices and a healthy menu for eat-in or take-out, promoting the slow movement and serving fresh food that is local and organic.

#### **What inspired you to start your social venture?**

Our business is about taking action against a social and/or environmental issue and our three main areas are: poverty, health, and the environment. Through our business model, we work towards challenges related to these three areas.

#### **How do you create social impact with your organization?**

Seven Shores Urban Market & Café is a social venture, whereby success isn't measured by profit alone. Acting as a portal for poor populations around the world to fairly market their products, Seven Shores sells fairly traded items to support populations globally. In addition, Seven Shores sources local food to support small scale farmers in the Waterloo Region.

#### **What challenges and lessons can you share from your experience as a young social entrepreneur?**

Work with the highest quality and most ethical suppliers you can connect with - the customers will appreciate your efforts in sourcing the product. Hire staff members who are passionate about your business model and are working to help make a difference – the training can be done after. Listen to your customers – they are your #1 ambassadors to help with the growth and success of your company.

#### **How do you plan to improve or expand your social venture in the next few years?**

Continue to listen to the customers and make improvements based on their suggestions and ideas.

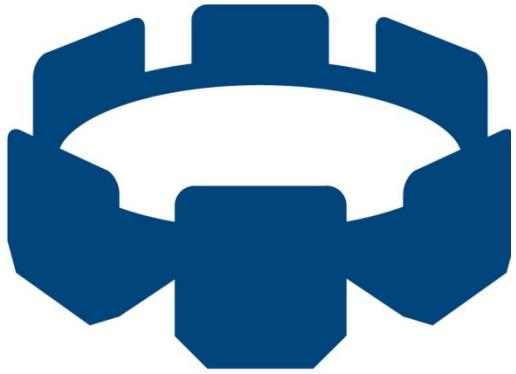
## Appendix 2: Resource Directory

### *Info, Tools and Services*

[Business Development Canada](#)  
[Business Model Generation](#)  
[Canadian Social Entrepreneurship Foundation](#)  
[Canadian Youth Business Foundation](#)  
[Centre for Social Innovation](#)  
[Enterprising Non-Profits](#)  
[Hub Ottawa](#)  
[Invest Ottawa](#)  
[MaRS Entrepreneur's Toolkit](#)  
[SEE Change Magazine](#)  
[Social Enterprise Council of Canada](#)  
[SiG@MaRS](#)  
[SoJo](#)  
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### *Funding*

[Aboriginal Business Canada](#)  
[Ashoka Changemakers Competitions](#)  
[Awesome Ottawa](#)  
[Business Development Canada – Young Entrepreneur Award](#)  
[Canadian Youth Business Foundation – Start-up Program](#)  
[Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation – Young Entrepreneur Program](#)  
[Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation – Summer Company](#)  
[Ottawa Community Loan Fund](#)  
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[Small Change Fund](#)  
[SmartStart \(Centre for Commercialization of Research\)](#)  
[TiG-Pearson Fellowships](#)  
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