



Centre of Learning  
& Development

Stronger Communities Together



2025

# Annual Report

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## **Vision**

Stronger Communities Together

## **Mission**

Facilitating community connections through innovative learning

## **Strategic Priorities**

This year began with a new set of priorities for CL&D for 2025-2028:

- Scale employer partnerships and paid experiential placements
- Grow outreach to serve 70% more participants
- Deepen alumni engagement, as well as volunteer and donor networks
- Deliver transparent, real-time impact reporting for funders and stakeholders



# Message from our Executive Director

## *“Today’s Accomplishments Were Yesterday’s Goals”*

As I reflect on 2024–25, it is clear that our progress is rooted in the vision and determination we summoned in years past. Yet, just as yesterday’s goals shaped today’s accomplishments, our focus remains on the future we are actively working to create.

### **Celebrating Progress, Strengthening Foundations:**

This year, we built on a legacy of innovation, partnership, and service. Our team adapted to new realities with resilience, streamlined our data collection systems for greater efficiency, and delivered high-impact programming during a period of tremendous change; a testament to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and community supporters.

From the continued success of our Academic Upskilling program to our capacity-building efforts with newcomer women through the Immigrant Women Integration Program and the Regent Park Sewing Studio, our work has remained rooted in equity, access, and community-led development. These efforts enabled us to overcome sector challenges and serve those who rely on us most.

**Looking Ahead:** Staying true to our belief that every accomplishment starts with a bold goal, we’re setting sights on a transformative agenda:

- **Youth Employability Preparation Program:** With increasing support, we are preparing to expand this initiative to ready the next generation of leaders. This growth will open new pathways to employment for youth in the communities we serve.

- **Regent Park Sewing Studio:** Our vision is to expand, increasing annual enrollment through added sewing courses, supplemented by hybrid and evening workshops to improve access and resiliency.
- **Collaborative Partnerships and System Innovations:** We will continue to enhance feedback processes, leveraging technology to improve tracking and measurement across all programs and partnerships.
- **Toronto Centre College for Community & Career Innovation:** We are excited to formally launch the college in 2026. This milestone will provide our participants with access to recognized certificates, micro-credentials and diplomas, helping them bridge gaps in education and employment.

### **Navigating Sector Challenges with Resolve:**

We acknowledge the pressing challenges facing the non-profit sector like rising costs, changing needs and workforce challenges. Despite these, our organization has remained resilient.

**Our Commitment:** We will continue to prioritize inclusion and accessibility and remain steadfast in our mission to serve. The journey ahead is ambitious, and with your continued trust and collaboration, our new goals will become the next chapter of accomplishments for our organization and those we support.

Thank you for believing in what we can achieve, together. **With gratitude!**

**Alfred Jean-Baptiste**  
Executive Director



# A Word from our Board Chair

It is my privilege to once again address you as Chair of the Board of Directors. This past year has been one of both challenge and growth; a year that truly reaffirmed our commitment to our Vision of “**Stronger Communities Together.**”

Across Canada, non-profits have faced significant fundraising challenges. Rising operational costs, reduced funding, and shifting priorities have placed extraordinary pressure on organizations that serve our most vulnerable populations. CL&D has not been immune to these realities. Yet, guided by our Mission - “**Facilitating Community Connections through Innovative Learning**” – CL&D has continued to adapt and evolve with purpose. In response to these trends, we have taken steps to diversify our funding model. We are cultivating **long-term corporate partnerships**. Unlike traditional grants, these partnerships allow us to plan and deliver sustainable programs that address long-term needs rather than simply reacting to the next funding cycle. This strategic shift has strengthened our foundation and positioned CL&D for greater stability and innovation.

We recognize these transitions have not been easy. The economic pressures of the past year have required us to make difficult decisions that affected both our staff and participants. Through it all, our team has embodied our core values:

- **Adaptive**, in finding new ways to meet community needs amid changing realities
- **Accessible**, in ensuring our programs continue to reach those who need them most
- **Collaborative**, in deepening partnerships that multiply our impact

Amidst the challenges, there has been much to celebrate. Our **core programs** continue to create pathways to independence and success in both the short-term, through individual outcomes, and in the long-term, in community resiliency. This year also marked exciting progress in the development of our **Career College**, with the curriculum now well underway and our official launch anticipated in 2026.

Thanks to the unwavering leadership of our Executive Director, Alfred Jean-Baptiste, we have secured several **new sponsorships and funding partners** that will help us close 2025 in a strong position. These new relationships not only ensure financial stability but also enable us to move confidently into 2026 with renewed focus, particularly on the **Youth Employability Preparation Program** (YEPP).

As Chair, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our dedicated **Board of Directors**, Karen, Fiona, Ian, Mary Joy and Akierah. It is through their participation, collaborative and willingness to evolve that we are able to embrace novel and innovative solutions.

I am also deeply appreciative of our **Executive Director**, the entire **CL&D staff**, our **volunteers**, and our many **community and corporate partners**. Together, you exemplify what it means to live our organizational Vision.

**With appreciation and optimism for the year ahead!**

**Bryan Duarte**  
*Chair, Board of Directors*



## Recognition & Awards

**Charity Village Award:** CL&D is a proud recipient of the Best Nonprofit Employer - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Under 20 Staff) Award during the 2024 Charity Village Conference at the end of the year. We are honoured to be recognized and dedicated to continuing and enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion practices within all aspects of the Centre.



## Programming Overview

The underlying goal of all programs is to amplify the voices of those who are facing systemic barriers and oppression through capacity building.

### We have three main programming areas:

- **Training\***
  - Immigrant Women Integration Program (IWIP)
  - Academic Upskilling (AU)
- **Social Enterprises**
  - Regent Park Sewing Studio, in partnership with OCAD University and DESIGNwith
  - Clear Language and Design (CLAD)
- **Civic Engagement**
  - Community events and workshops
  - Community courses in partnership with academic institutions
  - Local grassroots group supports

54

learners supported through Employment Ontario:  
Get Set (Skills, Education and Training) trainings\*\*

\*Our two training programs are supported by Employment Ontario

\*\*This statistic reflects participants during our fiscal year from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.



# Immigrant Women Integration Program

**The Immigrant Women Integration Program (IWIP)** is a leadership training program for newcomer and immigrant women interested in working within the social service sector. This civic leadership opportunity promotes advocacy, expands career and academic pathways, fosters a sense of belonging, facilitates access to programs and services and contributes to community building.

The full-time, intensive program welcomes 2 cohorts each academic year. Every cohort completes 5 to 6 months of **blended instruction** including virtual, in-person, group and independent learning, before moving into an **internship** component within a local social service organization. The program offers 8 certifications and 5 micro-credentials touching on subjects like workforce development, community research, mindfulness, grant writing, case management and more. To ensure **equitable access**, the program provides wrap-around supports such as laptop loans and transportation subsidies.

*Thank you to program funders: City of Toronto, United Way Greater Toronto, and Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development*





# 2024-25 IWIP Highlights

The statistics below refer to the academic year from September 2024 to June 2025.

14

official program graduates

6

placement partners

1,300+

hours of placement completed by trainees

93%

noted confidence in highlighting their skills & experience to an employer

100%

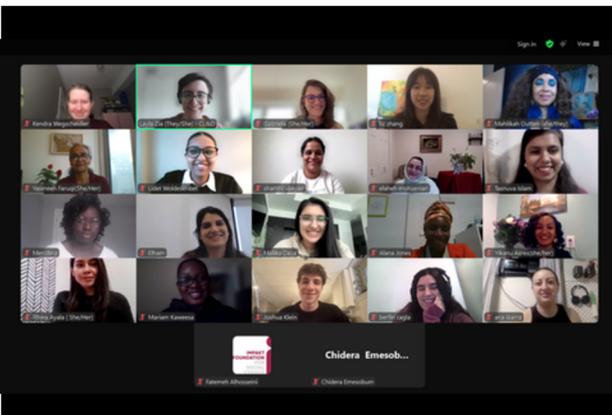
noted an increase in communication and digital skills

93%

noted an increase in confidence of taking on community leadership roles

## Digital Training & Learning

Digital tools are essential to the continually-evolving hybrid learning model within our core programs. Participants receive laptop loans and access to Brightspace, our learning management system, to aid online learning. Meanwhile, our IWIP program continues to experiment with Virtual Reality as a tool for practicing problem solving, communication, and collaboration skills through mock presentation, interview and meeting scenarios.





When I first came across the Immigrant Women Integration Program, even the name made me feel included. As a newcomer to Canada, IWIP was the first place where I felt I belonged. IWIP helped me grow both personally and professionally, I discovered my strengths, built meaningful friendships, and felt valued and appreciated.

Through IWIP, I gained a strong foundation in anti-oppression, transformative justice, de-escalation, mindfulness, leadership, community mentorship and the basics of community work. After the program, I began volunteering with community organizations such as Impakt Foundation and Fife House. Although I currently work in property management, I continue to volunteer with shelter service providers and remain passionate about creating safe, welcoming spaces for the community. I look forward to pursuing further studies and building a career in social work, inspired by the confidence IWIP gave me.”

**- Yikanu, 2025 IWIP Graduate, Liz Cooke Award Recipient**



For me, IWIP was a chance to strengthen my skills in community engagement, increase my sense of belonging, and prepare for a career in social services.

Having previously completed the Academic Upskilling program, I wanted to continue growing both personally and professionally. Through IWIP, I gained hands-on experience in advocacy, outreach, and community support, while learning from amazing mentors and peers who shared my passion for helping others. What I enjoyed most was connecting with inspiring women from diverse backgrounds and working together to empower our communities.

Now, as a full-time Social Services student at George Brown College, I continue to apply what I learned through IWIP in my studies and volunteer work. The program not only equipped me with practical tools and confidence, but also reinforced my belief in the power of community, inclusion, and giving back. IWIP has truly been a stepping stone toward my goal of making a positive difference in people’s lives.

**- Rhina, 2025 IWIP Graduate, Daniels Civic Engagement Award Recipient**





# Academic Upskilling & Digital Foundations

**Academic Upskilling (AU)** is a lifelong learning program for adults looking to improve reading, writing, numeracy, communications, and digital skills. The program approaches instruction with a focus on problem-solving, creativity, collaboration and innovation. Participants choose one of five **goal paths**: secondary school credit, post-secondary education, apprenticeship, employment, or independence. The program is delivered through a mix of in-person and virtual instruction, group work, independent study, and personalized one-on-one tutoring support. It spans the entire academic year, with the flexibility for learners to extend their participation based on **individual needs**.

With the rising need for digital training, we continue to emphasize our **AU Digital Foundations** course. It covers topics such as web browsers, video conferencing, social media, cybersecurity and more. It can be taken as a standalone course or as part of AU.

*The statistics below refer to the academic year from September 2024 to June 2025.*

6

AU graduates

100%

strongly recommend AU

7

AU volunteers



## Building Your LinkedIn Profile

In March of 2025, TD volunteers joined AU students for a unique networking opportunity focused on building participants' online presence and learning strategies for digital job finding and network building. The workshop also included the opportunity to take a portrait to accompany their newly established profile.

*Thank you to program funder: Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development*

In September 2024, I joined the Centre of Learning's Academic Upskilling Program, where I was warmly welcomed by the staff. As soon as I began, I realized that the Centre offered a variety of opportunities to help achieve my goals.

Two months later, the Centre introduced a course on Mental Health First Aid, which became a turning point for me. This course allowed me to start working again after such a long wait, marking the first step toward rebuilding my dreams. In addition, I enrolled in another course offered in partnership with the University of Toronto. Completing that course and earning a certificate added great value to my resume. Today, I am proud to be part of the IWIP program.

My message to everyone is: never give up on your dreams. Always pursue your passions with determination. Success doesn't come easily - you must stay dedicated, be willing to sacrifice your time, and remind yourself that age should never define you.

**- Fatmata, 2025 AU Graduate, Daniels Civic Engagement Award Recipient**



My journey has taken me across several countries as part of my engineering career. After arriving in Canada, I set out to build a new chapter establishing a business partnership while continuing my passion for community service. In 2022, I received the Platinum Jubilee Award, House of Commons of Canada, which strengthened my commitment to serve others.

I decided to join Academic Upskilling because I wanted to build my skills in digital technology, language arts and numeracy. What I loved most about the program was how it opened a pathway to post-secondary education and how the instructor truly took the time to understand each student's strengths and goals. After completing the program, I felt a big boost in my confidence and knowledge, especially in digital technology. During that time, I also completed the Evaluation in Community Work, Activating Community Leadership and The Changing Cultures of Regent Park courses.

My heartfelt thanks to Joseph, AU Instructor, and the CL&D team. Your commitment to learners' success and well-being makes CL&D an exceptional place to grow.

**- Syed Kabir, 2025 AU Graduate, Liz Cooke Award Recipient**



# Regent Park Sewing Studio

The **Regent Park Sewing Studio (RPSS)** began in 2014 to provide space for newcomer women to connect with each other, expand their skills, and generate income. The group has been growing steadily ever since. It has become a go-to in the neighbourhood for free community classes, the creation of unique pieces, and repair clinics.

RPSS continues to take steps towards independence and increasing capacity of the group, including its members and participants. A key component in this journey has been our long-time partnership with **DESIGNwith**, an innovation lab associated with OCAD University focused on sustainable practices. The collaboration provides income-generation opportunities for RPSS members through co-design and co-production of unique products made from upcycled materials. The partnership also supported a 2025 IWIP graduate in hosting repair workshops within the lab space.

In February, the Studio was celebrated during the **2025 Bhayana Family Foundation Awards**, hosted by United Way Greater Toronto, for the group's teamwork and community contributions. Additionally, the Studio was recognized in the **2025 Toronto Urban Design Awards** as part of the project team supporting Red Embers, a public art piece dedicated to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.



90

sewing program  
graduates

6

RPSS members worked  
with DESIGNwith

*Thank you to program funders: TD Bank & Ontario Trillium Foundation*



# Clear Language and Design

**Clear Language and Design (CLAD)** is our Centre's editing and training service.

The International Standards Organization defines plain language this way:

**A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended readers can easily:**

- **find what they need**
- **understand what they find, and**
- **use that information.**

Information that is unnecessarily complex and bureaucratic puts up barriers for everyone. But it has an especially serious impact on people whose first language is not English and people who are upgrading their literacy skills.



The follow up coaching session was a great opportunity to get one-to-one assistance and ideas related to my specific work area—an added bonus to an already engaging and informative course!

- **Ontario Government Communications Staff**

This year, Clear Language and Design worked with **8** organizations on more than **25** writing projects. **Our clients included:**

- Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators
- Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority
- College of Operational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Dietitians of Ontario
- Métis Nation of Ontario
- Open Policy Ontario

*We also provided training and individual coaching to staff of Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, College of Dietitians of Ontario, College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, Métis Nation of Ontario and Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority.*



# Community Connections & Partnerships

Each year, we support our community beyond our core programming through diverse partnerships. **Here are some of the initiatives we have collaborated on:**

## Cultural Bazaar 2025

*Partners: City of Toronto, Mothers of Peace, City Councillor Chris Moise Office*

The outdoor summer market was back in 2025 at the Big Park. The Bazaar is a platform to connect Regent Park residents, old and new, promote local entrepreneurs and celebrate the neighbourhood. Event staff include local youth and residents. 3,000+ individuals attended the 2025 Bazaar with 88% reporting increased community pride.

## Hidden Talent Documentary Screenings

*Partner: George Brown College Fashion Exchange*

Produced by GBC Fashion Exchange, Hidden Talents is a documentary celebrating the cultural sewing and embroidery practices of five Regent Park sewists. Screenings of the documentary were hosted at CL&D and GBC welcoming students, residents, industry leaders and corporate partners. We encourage you to watch the documentary [here](#).

## Regent Park Fashion Show 2025

*Partner: City of Toronto*

This annual community-driven tradition features Regent Park residents as both sewists and models. Led by our Regent Park Sewing Studio, show pieces are made-to-measure for every model utilizing upcycled materials to create one-of-a-kind designs. This year, 15 residents walked the runway with 90 show attendees.



## **K4C Knowledge for Change Tkaronto Hub**

*Partners: Knowledge Equity Lab University of Toronto Scarborough, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education University of Toronto, Ontario Council for International Cooperation*

We are proud to be co-founders of the K4C Tkaronto Hub since 2019. The hub enables transformative change by providing accessible community-based research opportunities. This year the partnership has provided webinar series covering topics including emerging technologies like AI, Indigenous knowledge systems and participatory frameworks.

## **Public Speaking & Presentation Community Course**

*Partner: George Brown College*

This long-time partnership course supports residents in enhancing communication skills and confidence needed to express their viewpoints and concerns in public meeting settings. The spring 2025 cohort celebrated 11 course graduates.

## **Activating Community Leadership**

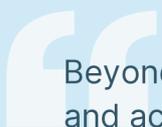
*Partner: Geography & Planning Department, University of Toronto*

In this course, residents gain skills, knowledge and networks to advocate for their communities. Instruction includes weekly guest speakers and discussions on issues like affordable housing, community safety, and municipal policy. This partnership course has been provided for over three years. The fall 2025 cohort celebrated 14 graduates.

## **Evaluation in Community Work**

*Partner: Unity Health Toronto*

Over 9 weeks, course participants passionate about community development gained understanding of evaluation frameworks, research ethics and use of logic models in local initiatives with 12 participants successfully completing all sessions.



Beyond providing various education programs and trainings, CL&D provides an inclusive and accessible space for residents to connect with one another in meaningful ways. For example, during the Activating Community Leadership course, CL&D provided child-minding so parents could participate and served dinner each evening before class for students to socialize and reflect. It was wonderful to see participants share conversations about the course content and watch new friendships form over delicious food.

**- Aditi Mehta, Associate Professor of Urban Studies, University of Toronto**

**Additional community engagements from this year include:**

- Ramadan Iftar
- Black History Month Workshop
- Yoga Classes
- Community Safety Focused Workshops

We have also provided our space for a community-led Regent Park Jewelry Craft program, Variable Academy’s Take Charge Program, Stop the Bleeding trainings and information sessions for residents on the Regent Park Community Benefits Package.

**Mothers of Peace Regent Park**

*Community Highlight*



Mothers of Peace (MoP) is a grassroots group aiming to increase community safety in Regent Park. CL&D has been collaborating with the group since its creation in 2015.

Currently, the group is dedicated to their **Healing Circles**. This initiative, funded by the City of Toronto, supports parents who lost their children to gun violence. Through bi-weekly sessions, the program focuses on trauma-informed care, therapist support and network-building. The group also attends healing trips and receives essential certificates such as First Aid & CPR.

Advocacy is essential to the work of MoP. Each year, the group participates in the annual **Community March Against Gun Violence**. In 2025, MoP supported the renaming of a local park in memory of **Louis March**, a local anti-gun violence activist and long-time supporter of MoP.

**22**

healing circle participants

**28+**

hours of group therapy

**2**

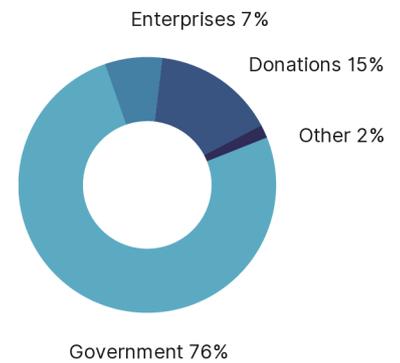
healing trips taken



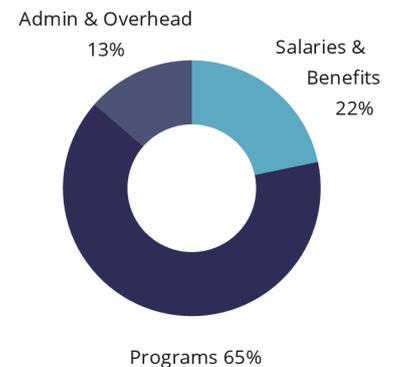
# Statement of Operations

Fiscal Year of April 1st, 2024 through March 31st, 2025

Income	2025	2024
Government	\$619,562	\$971,517
Donations	\$126,119	\$136,635
Productive Enterprises	\$58,707	\$57,000
Other	\$13,371	\$15,239
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$817,759</b>	<b>\$1,180,391</b>



Expenses	2025	2024
Salaries & Benefits	\$237,456	\$281,044
Program Expenses	\$707,427	\$731,153
Admin & Overhead	\$148,933	\$171,425
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,093,816</b>	<b>\$1,183,622</b>



Expenditures over Revenue      **(\$276,057)**      **(\$3,231)**

## Board of Directors

**Bryan Duarte**, Board Chair  
**Karen Villanueva**, Vice President  
**Ian Male**, Communications Officer  
**Fiona Umoh**, Treasurer

**Mary Joy Mantzios**, Director  
**Akierah Binns**, Director  
**Alfred Jean-Baptiste**, Ex-Officio





# Planning for the Future at CL&D

The coming years bring new strategic initiatives and program growth, as well as the formal integration of the **Youth Employability Preparation Program (YEPP)**.

Launched through collaborative trusteeship with sector leaders and the **Toronto District School Board**, YEPP has rapidly grown into one of Toronto's leading career preparation initiatives for marginalized youth. As of mid-2025, YEPP is officially housed within CL&D, bringing long-term continuity, operational stability, and enriched access to resources.

Toronto's youth unemployment remains persistently high, at 14.6%, more than twice the adult rate. In response, YEPP provides a holistic, wraparound approach that builds essential skills, confidence, and career pathways. Each **8-week** cohort delivers:

- Hands-on **skills development** and **career exploration**
- **Financial literacy, homeownership, and tax education**
- Real-life **industry exposure** and **employer engagement** through strategic partnerships with schools and employers
- Comprehensive **wraparound supports** addressing participation barriers

Since 2023, our central hub at David and Mary Thompson Collegiate has welcomed **980** youth from **14** schools, with **100%** recommending the program. With new funding partnerships, we hope to increase the annual capacity to over **800** youth by **2028**. Curriculum upgrades in 2025 add digital skills, skilled trades, and Google Professional Certificates.

Toronto's youth are ready to shape their futures. CL&D is determined to do its part to ensure many of them have the resources, opportunities and support they deserve with targeted investment, proven programming and community commitment.





# Get Involved



Do you want to support CL&D as we continue to grow?  
**Here are some ways you can get involved:**

## Volunteer & Placement Opportunities

We welcome volunteers who look to support our mission. Opportunities include supporting day-to-day of our Immigrant Women Integration program, tutoring for our Academic Upskilling Program or supporting organization of our community programming. Perhaps you are a great candidate for our Board of Directors. There are many ways to help us grow!

## Community Builders Monthly Giving Program

Community Builders is a group of generous donors who have made a monthly pledge to support our work. This support is vital in ensuring CL&D has the foundational capacity to continue serving our communities.

## Targeted Support

In the coming year, we are especially looking for support in our digital training, whether that is a donations of gently used digital equipment or tutoring support for digital skills programming.

To discuss these and many other opportunities, contact us at [info@tcclld.org](mailto:info@tcclld.org) or **647-493-2462**

**To give, please visit [www.tcclld.org/donate](http://www.tcclld.org/donate)**



# Partners & Friends

*Financial and material support received November 1st, 2024 through October 31st, 2025*

## **Sustaining (\$50,000+)**

Ontario Trillium Foundation, TD Bank, Employment Ontario, City of Toronto, United Way Greater Toronto, Ontario Ministry of Labour Immigration, Training and Skills Development, TD Securities, Agnico Eagle, Sean Boyd

## **Catalyst (\$10,000 - \$49,999)**

Fidelity Investments, Innoweave, Ernst & Young LLP, RBC Community Investment

## **Changemakers (\$5,000 - \$9,999)**

The Daniels Corporation, Tridel, David Family Fund, Grow with Google, Microsoft Education

## **Connector (\$1,000 - \$4,999)**

Mitchell Cohen, Elizabeth Endowment Fund, Scarball, Toronto Community Housing, Clayton Gyotoku Fund, Humaniti, Janet Campbell

## **Advocate (Under \$1,000)**

James Swafford, David Olds, Susan Ellis, Fred Silk, Anonymous, Fauzan Butt, Hydro One Donors, Christine Hughes, Adriana Silva, Sam's Food Stores, Adrian Heaps

## **Community Builders (Monthly Giving Program)**

Siobhan Harrop-Scott, Karen Diver, Michael Dewson, Annet Sharimah Nabagala

**Sustaining Funders**



**Corporate Partners**



AGNICO EAGLE

**Foundation Partners**



**Affiliate Partners**



Education & Community Partners

