

2025

HIGHLIGHTS



ROI 



BUILDING *YOUNG LEADERS*

FOR TODAY'S RURAL CHALLENGES

OUR PURPOSE

Rural Change Makers are the leaders of tomorrow and this program prepares them for future challenges.

The Rural Change Makers Program builds youth leadership and rural development capacity throughout Ontario. Emerging leaders apply the skills learned toward their future goals both personally and professionally. Skills learned are transferred back to young leaders' communities, careers, businesses, organizations and farms – helping to create life stability and community economic resilience.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Partners are important allies in these efforts helping the Rural Ontario Institute ensure delivery of this program reaches emerging leaders from diverse regions and lived experiences. Your contributions are pivotal in building skills and in supporting practical application of those skills by youth in their work, lives and communities. The Ignite Action Weekend, held in March 2025, brought participants from Class 4 together to network, practice leadership tools and develop SMART Action Plans. This was a critical juncture in the change maker journey – following 6 months of skills building before leaders launched into independent projects and community activities. The positive response from change makers at Ignite was incredibly valuable:

- **95%** said Ignite helped prepare them for their future goals, either in their career or education, working with their community or on a community development or entrepreneurial activity.
- **95%** said they feel more confident facilitating a community session using tools from their RCM Toolkit.
- **90%** said the Ignite activities increased their ability to actively listen to others.
- **92%** said they felt excited and confident moving on to their Community Discovery or Community Development Activities.

"My favourite part was getting to know everyone from different backgrounds - those from southern Ontario, northern Ontario, remote Indigenous communities, and India. It was incredible having the opportunity to talk with everyone in person about their life experiences, backgrounds, experiences in rural Ontario, community projects, etc. I think it has really broadened my perspective and will benefit my advocacy skills in the future, all the while making beneficial networking connections." Rural Change Maker.

"I really enjoyed the concurrent sessions. Having the chance to practice various engagement tools from the toolkit was beneficial and gave me a better sense of security in my ability to facilitate a community engagement session. I also appreciated the amount of free time we were provided. I feel like it gave me the opportunity to really get to know the other changemakers and staff and develop better relationships with them," Rural Change Maker.

"The workshop facilitations were so useful and the exchanges between participants were enriching," Rural Change Maker.

"Meeting people face to face was my favourite part. I feel in person gatherings are so important for building stronger connections," Rural Change Maker.

CHANGE MAKER OUTCOMES



Change Makers have masterfully applied their training and skills to create meaningful outcomes in their lives and communities. The following are some of the initiatives, projects, plans and roles young leaders are undertaking. Some graduates have applied their skills to existing projects, some to new ones, some have advanced their careers taking on new leadership roles or employment opportunities and some have developed plans for social enterprises and business start-ups. The efforts of change makers, whether personal or professional, all work together to ignite positive developments and create opportunities for not only social good, but economic stability at the individual, institution and community level.

FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF CHANGE MAKER OUTCOMES WITH MANY 2025 GRADUATES ADVANCING MORE THAN ONE GOAL



9%

of change makers

have advanced their careers taking on new leadership roles or moving from under-employment.



55%

launched or grew

community economic development initiatives & projects. 27% within municipal or First Nations governance.



50%

of change maker community projects

and activities were incorporated into paid employment or successful receipt of project funding.



36%

undertook

life-stabilizing activities and plans for future educational goals.



14%

cultivated new

initiatives and projects in the arts and culture sector.



14%

started or grew

new businesses or entrepreneurial pursuits.

CHANGE MAKER IMPACT

Community economic development activities of the 2025 Graduating Class



- **www.officialhumansofcanada.com** - Celebrating the stories of Canada, one Human at a time! *Social Enterprise!*
- **Blueprint for collaborative governance** in Head - Clara - Maria Township – empowering small, rural Ontario municipalities to lead with community-driven, collaborative strategies. *Employment Aligned!*
- **Wellspring Digital Farmers' Market** - Digital Expansion of Trade and Agricultural Marketplaces for local farmers in the Timmins area. *Community Building!*
- **Wellspring Farms** - Social enterprise plans for locally sourced and supported food distribution business in the Timmins region. *New Business!*
- **Travelling Metis** – art and podcast project ensuring the stories and history of Métis elders and people are preserved for generations to come. *Arts, Culture & Heritage!*
- **Paving The Way Project** - supporting the entrance of women into the trades. A collaborative project to create clear pathways for young women entering/re-entering the trades, provide supportive networks for tradeswomen and to motivate, educate and encourage hiring of young tradeswomen. + *Career Advancement!*
- **Youth Pride in the Park** - Prince Edward County – creating safe and affirming spaces, connecting youth to resources, increasing community awareness and encouraging collaboration among community members, businesses and organizations. *Community Building!*
- **Municipal Community Service Projects** – Actioning new network resources in municipal Poverty Reduction Strategies bringing Bridges Out of Poverty training to community partners and members at large, and repurposing technology for community members in need. *Employment Aligned!*
- **Uplift Youth Summit** – municipal youth summit creating opportunities for engagement, belonging and leadership with children in the region of Eganville. *Employment Aligned!*
- **Lead Local: Womxn of Haliburton County** – inclusive and welcoming community-driven engagement movement and forum designed to amplify the voices of women across the region and help shape local municipal strategic planning. Co-hosted by change maker entrepreneur and business owner of Reform & Restore Wellness Hub. *Business Aligned!*
- **Deep River Wellness Hub** - Development of centralized multi-service resource hub in eastern Ontario providing harm reduction, pre-natal resources and mental health and wellbeing supports to community members. *Community Building!*
- **Community Safety and Wellbeing** – employment related community safety engagement and planning in remote Northwestern Ontario First Nation. *Career Advancement!*
- **Development of an Environmental Consulting Business** - supporting private and public sector projects with culturally informed land use practices centred around traditional knowledge and environmental expertise. *Future Building!*
- **Employment related housing security work** - Using skills and training to support housing security projects in Huron County including local Housing Symposium. *Employment Aligned!*
- **Advancing the arts** – planning first record launch and tour of local southwestern Ontario band blending storytelling, humor, and songwriting. *Arts, Culture & Heritage!*
- **Behind the Curtain of Health Care** - dedicated to inspiring youth to explore and pursue careers in the healthcare industry, providing accessible educational resources and support to students, educators, and community partners. *Community Building!*
- **Bop a Stay** – short term accommodation initiative bridging the gap between housing abundance and housing insecurity among seniors and newcomers in Thunder Bay, ON. *Community Building!*
- **Brighton Young Professional Network** - fostering growth and creating opportunities for young professionals in Northumberland County, Ontario. *Employment Aligned!*
- **Youth Amplifier and Advocacy** - supporting connection, belonging, community development and empowerment among First Nation youth in Thunder Bay region. *Employment Aligned!*
- **Labour Market Indicators Advisory Table** – collaborative business development and employment services programming in Parry sound, Hurst, Timmins, Sault St. Marie, Moosonee (James Bay Coast), Wawa, Parry Sound and North Bay regions. *Employment Aligned!*

Thank you

RURAL CHANGE MAKER PARTNERS



Foundation



LET'S STAY CONNECTED



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