



# RURAL CHANGE MAKERS



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## Class Directory

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2024-2025

[www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca](http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca)

**ROI**  RURAL ONTARIO  
INSTITUTE



The **Rural Change Makers** (RCM) program shapes emerging leaders in rural Ontario to lead community economic development solutions with their communities. Inspiring young leaders to tackle rural challenges and BE the change they want to see in their future, community and world.





# Program Overview

Rural Change Makers participate in a 12-month leadership learning journey, comprised of skills-building learning labs, one Ignite Practicum, the development of SMART Action Plans and 6 months of community building activities where skills developed within the program are transferred back to rural communities through youth initiatives, enterprises, career and employment advancements and life stabilizing activities.

# Leadership & Skills Training



**Learning Lab 1:**  
Essential Resources &  
Bridges Out Of Poverty

**Learning Lab 2:**  
Community Resources,  
Future Visioning & 2-  
Eyed Seeing

**Learning Lab 3:**  
Indigenous Governance  
and Cross Cultural  
Understanding

**Learning Lab 4:** High  
Impact Communication  
and Cognitive  
Behavioural Styles

**Learning Lab 5:**  
Financial Literacy &  
Fund Development

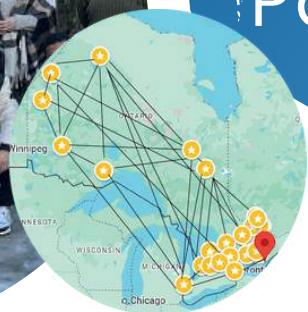
**Learning Lab 6:**  
Project Management  
and Evaluation

**Learning Lab 7:**  
Community Economic  
Development &  
Entrepreneurship

**Learning Lab 8:**  
Community  
Engagement & Civic  
Participation



**Ignite Action Lab: a multi-day gathering  
demonstrating leadership skills learned.**



# Class Participants



The 22 Rural Change Makers of Class 4 range in age from 18 to 35 and bring a wealth of backgrounds, education and career experience to the program. Participants represent over 20 rural locales including 3 remote First Nations in northwestern Ontario and they span the province from Kapuskasing and Thunder Bay in northern Ontario to Stratford in southern Ontario, Renfrew County in the east, and central communities including Haliburton, Barrie and Northumberland County.

At least 50% of current participants are equity-deserving youth with a broad range of lived experiences and cross sector understanding. 15% are from the municipal sector, 4% Francophone, 33% Indigenous, 52% represent racialized populations, 11% LGBTQ2IA+ self-identification, 19% self-identify barriers or disabilities and 41% are from remote rural regions, with many youth intersecting more than one demographic. Collectively they bring experience in economic development, poverty reduction, employment services, food and housing security, entrepreneurship, cultural heritage, journalism, policy development, Indigenous relations, non-government associations and small business.

**All participants contribute to a collective leadership journey of growth and development.**







# Participant Bios



**Abbie Lakhan** (Petawawa) – Industrial Hygiene Technician at Canadian Nuclear Laboratories who is passionate about the environment and sustainability.



**Bobbie McKay** (Thunder Bay) – Youth Amplifier for Feathers of Hope who is passionate about the work that she does, spending time with her family and in nature.



# Participant Bios



**Chirag Parcha** (Belleville) - Entrepreneur, community volunteer, author, artist and founder of Official Humans of Canada. Chirag is passionate about creating real change, he empowers others through mentorship, writing, art, and community initiatives.



**Christina Raddatz** (Douglas) - Christina lives in Renfrew County and is involved with her local crisis center. She has supported fundraising at the center, as well as at church and her children's school.



**Davinder Singh** (Timmins) - Davinder is involved with Anti-Hunger Coalition Timmins, an organization that fights hunger and works for food security. He has been involved with meetings and discussions for the improvement of his community and always tries to bring new and creative ideas to both his community and his workplace to make it a better place.



# Participant Bios



**Elizabeth Edwards** (Trenton) - Economic Development Officer for the City of Quinte West. Elizabeth volunteers on the Northumberland Fare Share Foodbank Board of Directors, is a Unit Leader Assistant for the Sparks (Girl Guides), is on the Board of Directors for the Ontario East Economic Development Commission, the Port Hope Environmental Advisory Committee, the Loyalist College Business Program PAC, the Bay of Quinte Film Office, and a mentor through the Small Business Centre.



**Francesca Solomon** (Guelph) - Francesca is a passionate advocate for leadership, public policy, and international development. Grounded in strong family values, she comes from a close-knit family of five. She lives in Guelph, ON where she is currently pursuing an MSc in Capacity Development & Extension with a focus on International Development Studies and Public Policy at the University of Guelph.





# Participant Bios



**Dr. Jessica Becking** (Bath) - Jessica is a passionate interdisciplinary researcher, artist and administrator. Jessica holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from Trent University and is currently the Research Coordinator for Loyalist College. She is actively involved in applied research and research creation, and she is a passionate place-poet.



**Josée Labelle** (Kapuskasing) - Network Support Specialist at College Boreal's SSM. Josée is passionate about sustainable economic development for Northern Ontario and is dedicated to promoting and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises.



# Participant Bios



**Kasha Kakekagumick** (Wabigoon) - Kasha helps her family raise money for community members and events, as well as for her school and church. She is an environmental monitor and a strong advocate for communication and the environment. Kasha wants to start an environmental team owned by the reserves and start up training services for students finishing high school. She advocates for the inherent rights of First Peoples.



**Kiydan Zachariah** (Picton) - Youth advocate from Prince Edward County. Kiydan has worked closely with many non-profit organizations in their community to improve youth well-being and leadership and is now supporting youth engagement for various projects with their municipality.



# Participant Bios



**Mina Bahador** (Richmond Hill) – Mina Bahador is a dedicated urban planner and is currently pursuing her Master's in Rural Planning and Development at the University of Guelph. She is passionate about contributing to community-driven, resilient planning initiatives that improve quality of life in rural areas.



**Morgan Scott** (Brighton) – Community Engagement Officer for the Municipality of Brighton who is passionate about making a positive impact in her community through her volunteerism.



**Natalee Schors** (Hillsdale) – Recent graduate of the Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) program at Queen's University, currently working with the Rural Ontario Medical Program (ROMP), based out of Collingwood. Natalee is passionate about rural medicine and improving economic development in rural communities.



# Participant Bios



**Rachel Richer** (Laurentian Hills) - Deputy Mayor at United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria. She volunteers her time to her local snowmobile club and library board and is passionate about lifelong learning and preserving the natural beauty of the area she calls home.



**Ropheka Adofo** (Thunder Bay) - Planner for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Ropheka is a dedicated mother and a wife who values quality time with her family and is passionate about travelling, meeting new people and actively seeks to make positive impact in her community.



**Samantha Loney** (Barrie) - Producer for Travelling Metis Podcast, filmmaker and journalist for Simcoe Community Media. Samantha is passionate about traveling around Turtle Island and sharing the stories of Metis people.



# Participant Bios



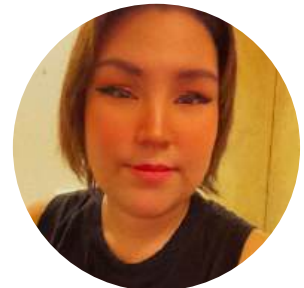
**Sarah Richer** (Eganville) - Community Development and Administration Assistant who is passionate about photography and the natural beauty of rural Ontario.



**Shay Hutchings** (Haliburton) - Shay is the Co-owner of Reform + Restore: Wellness Hub, a registered Massage Therapist and a certified Spins Instructor and is passionate about supporting youth in her community.



**Skye Kakekagumic** (Sandy Lake) - Skye is a passionate, determined Change Maker who is eager to participate in the Rural Change Makers experience and learn how to better support herself, her family, and her community.





# Participant Bios



**Will Wellington** (Stratford) - Social Research and Planning Specialist at United Way Perth-Huron. Will is passionate about conflict transformation, housing affordability, public policy, and organizational development.



**Zeel Parmer** (Windsor) - Zeel is an urban and regional planner. She completed her Master of Science degree in Italy and would like to contribute her innovative approaches to the program. Zeel has worked for a government smart village strategy designed to enhance community development and create a better life for residents.



# Thank you

## RURAL CHANGE MAKER PARTNERS



Foundation



Four County  
Labour Market Planning Board  
Serving Bruce Grey Huron Perth



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