



Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients announced

Andrew Beckerman



Andrew Beckerman's personal involvement in the struggle against discrimination as a gay man, near-death from complications of HIV, a suicidal depression from an HIV medication drug trial, and what he describes as a "a lucky break from a banker" to build his first house while a graduate student, inspired and allowed him to become an impassioned volunteer and philanthropic leader on Vancouver Island.

Andrew was board chair of AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI) and volunteered weekly at the front desk to interact and learn from clients. In 2010, the Victoria Cool Aid Society and AVI partnered to purchase a 15,000 square-foot property in downtown Victoria for a Community Health Centre and AVI education and support services. Andrew's support in honour of his mother expanded the amount of food available for his HIV+ peers at "Cafe Blanche". His contributions to Cool Aid total more than \$500,000 and his powerful advocacy has inspired other to give. Cool Aid's Homecoming Gala, aided by Andrew's leadership, raised \$394,000 in three years.

A retired architect and businessman, Andrew works long hours raising funds for local charities. His philanthropy and efforts are focused on equality, elevating leadership, promoting health and human rights for the LGBTQ+ community, encouraging post-secondary education and strengthening cultural institutions. He is a passionate advocate for people marginalized in the Capital Region, but also provincially and internationally.

Andrew has also been involved philanthropic endeavours including the Nature Conservancy, the Rainbow Railroad (saving the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals facing death and severe discrimination in their home countries by providing a refugee route to B.C. and elsewhere), the WITS Programs Foundation and National Philanthropy Day.

Andrew has a strong desire to change the world into a better place for all his neighbours whether they are born in Canada or are refugees or immigrants like himself.

Irene Bischler



Irene Bischler has been described as one of the most compassionate, selfless and empathetic people who has ever worked at Cranbrook's Amy Woodland Elementary School.

Irene is the first person in the building every morning. She sets up the breakfast club for the school feeding 30 to 40 kids every morning and greets kids who may not have otherwise been fed or had a positive interaction that day. She has made connections with restaurants, service groups, grocery stores and other community members and gathers donations on her own time to ensure the breakfast club runs smoothly.

After breakfast Irene starts social emotional support groups where kids cook, do carpentry, sew, decorate cakes and cookies, quilt blankets and dozens of other activities. She supports teachers in classrooms and often takes kids into the community for activities. Her goal each day is to ensure kids are happy, emotionally regulated and connected to the school community.

Irene has supported every level of athlete through her power skating and figure skating coaching. She has given respite care to kids to help out families in crisis. Irene has also worked with individuals with special needs for many years. She mentors young teachers and education assistants and has worked in Alternate Programs with School District #5's kids. Irene is the local president of the CUPE Union and is constantly working to ensure her members are supported despite the high stress situations they find themselves working in.

Irene's mission is to ensure the people around her have a better day, greater opportunity, feel empowered and valued and have a deeper purposeful connection with their community. The lives of students, staff, families and coworkers are richer and more fulfilling due to her endless energy and efforts.

Kristi Blakeway



In 2009 Kristi Blakeway was a school counsellor in Coquitlam wanting to find a way to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. Project HELLO (Helping Everyone Locate Loved Ones) came to light when Kristi rallied more than 50 students and teachers to create handmade cards and head to the Downtown Eastside (DTES) of Vancouver. They invited homeless people to fill in the cards with messages intended for long lost loved ones. Kristi and her students then began searching for those whom the messages were for, often with only a name and a city to work from. To date, Project Hello has reconnected more than 700 families through greeting cards, phone calls and face to face reunions.

Project HELLO blossomed into Beyond HELLO, a year-round initiative involving students and staff from multiple schools. Kristi recognized that there were rich stories to tell and connections to be made with those who society often dismisses or ignores. Each month, Kristi and her students take a homeless person to lunch to hear their story in an effort to shift the perception of homelessness.

Kristi is exceptional in her ability to make those often ignored feel valued. Seeing those on the fringes of society and bringing their stories to light is her gift of compassion. Under her leadership, countless students of all ages have been enriched by their experiences helping others.

Now an elementary school principal, Kristi is currently working towards a Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership specifically looking at ways that schools can connect with compassion and understand the needs of all students.

Zeeshan Hayat



With the misfortune of losing his parents at a young age, Zeeshan was given the opportunity to immigrate to Canada to be raised by his grandparents. This led him to making a life-commitment of leading a life of impact by supporting poverty, homelessness, and healthcare initiatives.

In 2007, he started gathering friends and family to engage and deliver meals to the homeless community in the Vancouver Downtown Eastside. The initiative flourished into a volunteer organization called 100 Meals a Week, delivering over 200,000 meals, blankets, clothing, and hygiene products to date.

Believing that healthcare is a human right and should be accessible to all members of society, he co-founded Prizm Media and RxtoMe to solve healthcare inefficiencies and improving the health outcomes of over 20,000,000 patients through digital technology.

Zeeshan has inspired his colleagues to participate in community outreach with paid volunteer days and allocates 2.5% of company profits towards local charities.

Zeeshan:

- joined St. Paul's Future Leaders – a committee of young professionals who dedicate their time to raise awareness and funding for St. Paul's foundation; and co-founded Pixel Moments, an interactive AR photo mosaic generated by selfie uploads to bring micro donations to the forefront, making philanthropy more accessible and attractive for a younger generation through Art & Technology.
- was behind the foundation of creating the Muslim Food Bank and Muslim Care Centre
- sits on the board for Islam Unraveled, facilitating interfaith dialogue against Islamophobia, bringing together communities, and eradicating hate speech.

As homelessness and substance addiction continues to grow in British Columbia, Zeeshan plans to build a foundation in honour of his late mother - to house; rehabilitate; provide food and personal necessities; and build capacity for people suffering from homelessness and transition them back into society and off the streets permanently.

Fawzan Hussain



Fawzan Hussain is an eighteen year old technology enthusiast, social innovator, and compassionate leader who believes that youth have the power to positively change their communities. He has demonstrated engagement and leadership in his community of Surrey.

Fawzan provides help where it is needed and goes above and beyond in his support. When he saw a call for help from the Neil Squire Society's Makers Making Change Program looking for 3D printing help, Fawzan self-funded his own 3D Printer.

Fawzan researched and secured a grant from the Government of Canada and TakingITGlobal to purchase 3D printing filament in order to produce 150 assistive devices that were distributed to people with disabilities across North America. These devices are designed to help people with disabilities overcome physical barriers.

By learning about the needs of people with disabilities through his work with Neil Squire Society's Makers Making Change Program, Fawzan investigated how he could help people using his technical skills. He did an independent research study on the role of technology in helping people with disabilities by creating a prototype brain computer interface. As part of his work he consulted with an expert of the subject, Dr. Gary Birch, a champion of accessibility who works in assistive technologies at the University of British Columbia, the Rick Hansen Institute and the Neil Squire Society.

In September 2019, Fawzan attended the MILSET Expo-Sciences International 2019 in Abu Dhabi, UAE where he showcased his Brain Computer Interface Communication System to youth from around the world. Fawzan also participated in several workshops including one on Artificial Intelligence in the Workplace and represented Canada in the closing ceremonies.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fawzan 3D Printed and delivered 1,545 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) devices to over 30 organizations across British Columbia.

Cole Izsak



In 2004 Cole Izsak was deported to Vancouver from the United States where he had lived for 41 years. Cole arrived in B.C. with \$20 and absolutely nothing else. He had never been to Vancouver and didn't know anyone here. Ultimately, addiction and homelessness brought him to his knees and in 2011, he finally surrendered and sought rehabilitation.

Cole was so fully committed to change that, at six months clean, he borrowed \$5,000 from his family, rented a home, and recruited other recovering addicts to come live with him as he pursued a better life through abstinence. Seven homes and 1,600 clients later, Cole is now the owner/operator of Back On Track Recovery and is nearly 10 years clean.

Most of Cole's clients come from the Downtown Eastside or jail, and all are on welfare or disability. He often takes clients in with no funding and his 65 beds are accessible to a segment of society who otherwise could never afford the quality of service Back On Track provides.

Hundreds of young men have turned their lives around because of Cole's guidance and inspiration. He ensures they get medical/dental attention, reunites them with family, encourages them to pursue their education and/or career training and supports them as they venture life on life's terms. Back On Track Recovery is fully licensed with the city and registered with the Ministry of Health.

Cole has risen from the depths of despair to a place where he can be an inspiration to others who might wish to take his extended hand of friendship toward a better life through recovery.

Donna Kane



Donna Kane is a highly regarded writer and thinker within Canada's arts network and is recognized nationally for project excellence. In 2017, in her position as Executive Director of the Peace Liard Regional Arts Council, she initiated and carried out a trio of 75th Anniversary Alaska Highway Arts projects and events that demonstrated her ongoing commitment to building regional community and establishing links with the provincial and national arts scenes.

The three projects were:

1. The Alaska Highway song writing contest and CD, which engaged regional musicians and was showcased in communities along the highway.
2. Multi-community readings by author Lawrence Hill (*The Book of Negroes*) who travelled the highway researching African American soldiers' involvement in its construction.
3. "Emergence", a new piece of public art made from a six-tonne trencher used to dig ditches for the highway in 1942. Permanently displayed next to the Dawson Creek Art Gallery, "Emergence" was a collaborative work by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists.

Donna possesses an enormous commitment, work ethic, innovative mind and modesty in fostering community. This is combined with her ability to connect the rural and remote northeast region of B.C. with the provincial and national arts and culture world. She has greatly influenced rural and remote peoples to take ownership of their interwoven unique heritage and embrace 'place.'

Donna spent 15 years as Northern Lights College Foundation's executive director and is presently Peace Liard Regional Arts Council's executive director, part time positions that she converted into more than full time work with huge volunteer hours and passion.

Donna Kane has an exceptional dedication to discover community potential and empower ownership through arts and culture. She exemplifies the good citizen who enhances community through acting both as external ambassador and internal catalyst for the Peace and Northern Rockies Districts.

Dr. Imogene Lim



Imogene Lim is a Vancouver Island University professor who has achieved numerous accomplishments as an educator and community activist. For the past two decades, she has established herself as a strong voice for heritage, especially for communities who lack representation in the current population. On her path to activism she has maintained a focus on issues of diversity and equity.

As a descendant of a Chinese head-tax payer, Imogene advocates for social justice through the lens of Chinese Canadian history. She advocated for lands now known as Coal Creek Historic Park in Cumberland that encompassed the former Chinatown and #1 Japanese Town. She was recognized as a “Present-Day Pioneer” in a Themed Issue of *The Scrivener Magazine*, 2002 and in that same year was presented with a Ruth Masters Hero Spoon, awarded to those who help their community, for her advocacy and community activism.

In Nanaimo, Imogene collaborated with a team of community members to create one of the city’s first heritage plaques, *Nanaimo’s Chinatowns* that represented the voices of the earliest Chinese Canadians. Through her community engagement in places on Vancouver Island and beyond, she has been sought as a board and committee member, locally, regionally and provincially. Often, she is the lone voice outside of larger metropolitan areas and reminds her colleagues that when speaking about the province, it is more than Vancouver or Victoria.

Imogene, in 2017, co-developed a travelling exhibit, *150 Years and Counting: Fighting for Justice on the Coast*. In response to the current COVID-19 pandemic, she is collaborating on a project with Nanaimo Museum, Nanaimo Community Archives, and Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives on *Central Vancouver Island: Racism in Our Communities* (working title). Her community engaged activism continues to bring silenced histories and stories of marginalized peoples to light.

Farouq Manji



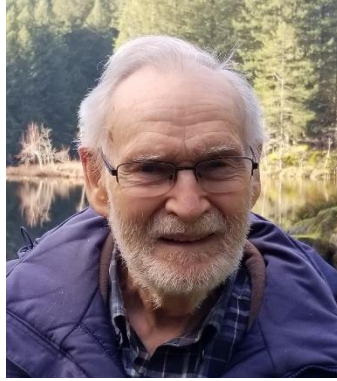
For more than three decades Farouq Manji has provided voluntary service to the Ismaili Muslim community in the lower mainland. He has worked tirelessly alongside internal and external stakeholders to further the community and its relationship with the people who live in these cities. Volunteerism has been a key value instilled in him from his family and being a part of the Ismaili community. He has led initiatives such as Ismaili CIVIC that yearly sees Ismailis give back to the broader community by volunteering at food banks, cleaning up the shoreline or planting trees. During the pandemic, Ismaili CIVIC sewed over 3000 cloth face masks and donated a collection of over 2000 lbs of food to local food banks.

Farouq has spearheaded initiatives at the community level that foster and encourage open dialogue inviting senior government and civic leaders to participate in thoughtful debates on Islamophobia, civic engagement, art and its contribution to the world, and academia and its role in lifelong learning. Farouq shows pride and pleasure in innovating new ideas and working collaboratively as a team to deliver on them.

Farouq is the Chief Marketing Officer for Sleep Shop, a family owned and operated retail business that was established in 1979. Mental health and the importance of sleep are key to what drives his passion for the business. Knowing that poor sleep and sleep disorders lead to an impaired quality of life, Farouq initiated an awareness campaign and partnered with UBC's Sleep Disorders Clinic where his team was trained to understand the issues associated with sleep.

The impact of mental health on people and communities is also important. Farouq spent close to two years giving time and knowledge to a working group through the Canadian Mental Health Association's B.C. Division. Farouq has also served on several committees including the United Way's Success by Six campaign and several Ismaili Walk campaigns.

Robert (Bob) McMinn



Bob McMinn is a community builder, leader, benefactor, conservationist, negotiator, innovator and super-volunteer whose record of community service would be hard to equal for duration, depth and diversity.

Bob's community leadership began in the 1960s, when the area now known as the District of Highlands, a beautiful, rugged, wooded region at the southwest corner of Vancouver Island's Saanich Peninsula, was threatened by development.

With a vision of protecting the area as greenspace for the benefit of the whole Capital Region, Bob gathered a group of like-minded residents in 1967 and founded the Highlands District Community Association. Over the following years, Bob led the drafting of a land use plan for the district and the study that led to incorporation in 1993. He was the District's first mayor.

Bob organized the Highlands Heritage Park Society, which restored the 1883 Caleb Pike homestead and reconstructed the 1893 Highlands Schoolhouse to provide community gathering places, and built the Highlands Museum to showcase the district's history. He started the Highlands Parks and Recreation Association and was founding chair of the Greater Victoria Greenbelt Society (GVGS).

GVGS began its initiative to acquire Mary Lake as a nature sanctuary in 2009. Bob was not only chief negotiator, but brought worldwide attention to the cause as the "octogenarian who Tweets." Now GVGS, which Bob chairs, is partnering with Tsartlip First Nation to develop the sanctuary as a teaching place for fusing Indigenous wisdom with western scientific knowledge.

During 53 years of community service, Bob has contributed more than half a million dollars in land, cash and materials and put in tens of thousands of volunteer hours to conserve greenspace and promote community relations. At age 96, Bob still serves on a council committee and the boards of all the societies he founded.

Stephanie Quon



In August 2017, Stephanie Quon founded the Sprouts Initiative, a community organization focused on three pillars: environmental action, accessibility and mental health advocacy. The Sprouts Initiative was inspired by Stephanie's desires to preserve and protect the environment, increase accessibility for all, and contribute to mental health and wellness initiatives in the community.

The Sprouts Initiative has involved leadership and volunteer participation from more than 100 youth, and has collectively received more than \$26,000 in grants.

With the End-of-Day Bread Project, product was collected from bakeries and stores and donated to local shelters, both minimizing waste and supporting marginalized populations. As of August 2020, the initiative has successfully donated more than 10,000 meals to those in need. With the Reusable Straws Project, reusable straws were given out to community members, with the goal of hosting positive conversations about sustainability and plastic use. This initiative also distributed 2,250 reusable straws, free of charge to the community.

For the past two years, Stephanie has independently partnered with organizations to initiate projects centred on accessibility. So far, she has received two \$10,000 grants to upgrade automated doors at a Vancouver hospital and at Neil Squire Society, a \$6,000 grant to fund sensory resources for Canucks Autism Network, a \$3,000 grant to fund resources for students with developmental disabilities at her past high school, and \$2,500 towards the new Sunny Hill Rehabilitation Centre at BC Children's Hospital.

Stephanie founded the Hidden Messages Project, an interactive art initiative that features art from local artists printed on cards hidden around the world for people to find. Over the past year the project has printed and distributed 13,000 pieces of art across Canada. Stephanie also organized a mental wellness care package project for high school students, called "self-sustainability" kits, and distributed 300 packages to high school students.

George Reifel



George Reifel is the catalyst who has worked quietly and diligently in the background, applying his business acumen to pull together the partners, the funding, the agreements and finally the securement of thousands of hectares of conservation properties, protected forever for British Columbians.

He has provided volunteer leadership for almost four decades to Ducks Unlimited and the British Columbia Waterfowl Society, three decades to The Nature Trust of British Columbia and two decades to the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

George continues to serve as an Honorary Director of Ducks Unlimited Canada, on the Advisory Board of The Nature Trust of British Columbia and as a Director Emeritus of the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

George is the strength behind the Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Delta. This magnificent and internationally significant wetland was created by his grandfather, dedicated to Canada by his father and George continues to provide oversight and financial support through the British Columbia Waterfowl Society which has managed the Sanctuary since 1963. Over 100,000 people now visit the Sanctuary annually, including thousands of school children discovering wildlife and wetlands through its nature education and interpretive programs.

As a Director of Ducks Unlimited Canada and The Nature Trust of British Columbia, George was responsible for the securement of many high profile conservation properties in B.C., including the South Arm Marshes complex and several agricultural properties in the Fraser River Delta, the 10,000 acre Hoodoos property in the Kootenays, Widgeon Valley in Coquitlam, Englishman River riparian, Buttertubs Marsh in Nanaimo, DL 1375 on Savary Island, the Koeeye estuary near Bella Bella and Kumdis Slough in Haida Gwaii.

In the 1980's, George established and chaired the B.C. Corporate Campaign for the Canadian Cancer Society and served as the Chair of the Real Estate and Finance Division for the United Way.

Cara Sinclair



Cara Sinclair now dedicates her life to improving the welfare of at-risk, often homeless, youth in Vancouver. Her goal is to help these young people exit the street and break the chain of entrenched homelessness. With this in mind, Cara founded H.E.L.P. for Youth Canada Society, a registered charity, where she volunteers fulltime. H.E.L.P. has two initiatives: Project Backpack (PBP) and funding educational bursaries.

Founded by Cara in 2005, PBP purchases backpacks, donates them to schools in the lower mainland, educates the participating students about Vancouver's homeless crisis, arranges for the packs to be stuffed with essential items including new clothes, toiletries, rain gear and other personal effects, and delivers these packs to shelters for distribution.

Last year more than 530 packs were distributed to those in need. Since its inception, thousands of packs have benefited these youth and shelters.

Under Cara's guidance, H.E.L.P. also awards bursaries to at-risk youth who are ready to go back to school. Bursaries have been awarded to students in 14 different occupational fields including: plumbing, pipe-fitting, early childhood education, marine engineering, dental assistance, electrical engineering, TV production and social work.

Cara has spoken at numerous events and to thousands of people. She has educated and inspired others to help. In May 2016, on the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Cara addressed hundreds of members of the BC Nurses Union about Vancouver's homeless youth crisis and her dream of how to make a difference. As she spoke, 260 backpacks were stuffed and donated by the nurses.

Cara's vision and efforts have directly improved the lives of thousands of disadvantaged youth, educated thousands of others about youth homelessness, and made Vancouver a kinder place to live.

Gale Stewart



Gale Stewart's commitment to providing support to B.C.'s most vulnerable youth and preventing them from becoming homeless spans over three decades. As founder and visionary of Aunt Leah's Place, an award winning non-profit charitable organization in New Westminster that works at the entry and exit points of the foster care system, Gale has made a lasting and significant difference in thousands of young people's lives. She is a source of innovative, compassionate leadership, is a generous leader and role model, and has inspired a legacy of care by building a lasting family and community for those who need it most – youth in and from the foster care system.

Aunt Leah's was founded in 1988, with one year of funding from the Ministry for Children and Families. After that Gale found a way to keep the home open. Aunt Leah's began independently fundraising and evolved into Aunt Leah's Tree Lots and Urban Thrift Store that to this day give 100 per cent of their profits to Aunt Leah's Thresholds Program.

Gale's positive influence and thoughtful leadership is responsible for the forward thinking culture of care that has inspired a community of support and long term donor confidence. She has put Aunt Leah's on a continued path of growth in an era where many social services are facing cut-backs and limiting services to those most in need.

The simple concept that remains the foundation of her work is the notion that nobody ages-out from a family. Aunt Leah's is the only service provider in B.C. with no-age out limit. This is a testament to Gale's passion and tenacity to the idea that every foster youth deserves a caring and compassionate family member on their side.