



# Broadening Access for Better Futures

Annual Report 2019 - 2020





# Our Mission

As a not-for-profit organization, YES (Youth Employment Services) enriches the community by providing English-language support services to help Quebecers find employment and to start and grow businesses.

YES is a place where everybody belongs and where everybody is treated with respect. **For almost 25 years, we have been providing practical tools to facilitate employment and entrepreneurship.** We make it our mission to listen, learn, respond, and listen again. With this approach and through the research that we conduct, we gain a thorough understanding of the current issues affecting English-speakers who have made Quebec their home. We then craft and provide adapted services to meet those needs. With free workshops and 1:1 sessions, we deliver much-needed practical support.

The active participation of English-speaking Quebecers is essential for the health of Quebec's economy. All over the province, English-speakers make use of YES's services to grow their networks and build a source of sustainable income.

**Our coaches and mentors help individuals to forge a career path and earn a living in a way that best fits their values and talents.** Whether that individual is an artist looking to turn their venture into a sustainable business or a single mother from overseas whose job search feels isolating, YES provides support, guidance, information, training, and resources. At YES, we help turn things around.

As a not-for-profit organization with its finger on the pulse and its ear to the ground, YES also seeks to bring organizations together to break down barriers for English-speaking communities living in Quebec. We seek to advocate for English-speaking communities all over the province, identifying best practices and then collaborating with other organizations to enable their implementation.

Thanks to our dedicated partners across the province, we are able to deliver diverse and accessible programming within our job search, entrepreneurship, and artist programs. YES seeks to be a voice of inclusion, empowering our clients, helping them to find connection and ultimately build fulfilling lives in Quebec.



# A Message from the President

DORIS JUERGENS



YES's founders would probably never have envisioned what YES has become today. 2019-2020 was another watershed year thanks to Aki's strong leadership and the commitment of our mutually supportive staff and volunteers. YES's team works tirelessly to meet the unique and specific needs of our clients every day. Their resourcefulness and innovative approach means YES is able to establish more varied and longer-term funding year over year.

YES now has many milestone programs underway, which continue to equalize opportunities for Quebec's diverse English-speaking communities, including more and more newcomers, whose second language is English. With the conclusion of the Advancing Women in STEM initiative on the horizon, the organization began launching its new ELLEvate initiative for women entrepreneurs. We were also proud to recognize the achievement of one particular entrepreneur at our annual Tune in to YES fundraising event in October.

Our first-ever Iris Unger Recognition Award was awarded to Sinthusia Kandiah, whose foundation uses proceeds from henna art to give back to marginalized populations. It is very fitting that our award should be named after our former Executive

Director, Iris Unger, since YES wouldn't be the organization it is today without her dedication and hard work. We want to make this a sustainable award so that we can celebrate a YES client every year and recognize the positive impact they are making in our community.

As we mark YES's 25th anniversary in 2020-2021, we can see that a lot has changed; our programming has expanded, challenges have morphed, and our understanding of the issues at play has evolved. What hasn't changed in 25 years? Our values. YES remains a caring organization where every client is treated as an individual with their own needs and objectives. We create a sustained relationship with our clients and partners and we continue to advocate for English-speaking Quebecers all over the province.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to our staff, fellow board members, partners, volunteers, donors and funders for continuing to help us provide these essential services to our clients, so they in turn can enjoy success and a sense of purpose as part of our community and contribute to the diversity and success of our economy. Thank you and here's to another 25 years of YES!



# A Message from the Executive Director

AKI TCHITACOV

Looking back on 2019-2020 as we approach 25 years of service to our community, I am struck by YES's continued output as an organization. Our team is not big, but our impact is mighty. It often seems as though we are punching above our weight - we achieve so much through the resourcefulness and creativity of our staff and volunteers, last year offering over 300 workshops, helping to start or grow more than 500 businesses, and counselling and coaching 3,624 clients. As I write this, we see how this work ethic allows us to raise our game when our community faces hardships such as COVID. We are especially grateful that our generous workshop leaders have made it possible for us to provide all our workshops online for free during the pandemic. This just builds on our tradition of providing accessible services online, constantly rallying our volunteers and upgrading our infrastructure so we can accommodate a growing need across Quebec.

YES is unparalleled in the accessibility and diversity of the workshops on offer. We are still truly relevant to Quebec's English-speaking community and we continue to be trusted to identify and respond to the needs of the diverse communities who rely on us.

Inclusion goes to the heart of our mission at YES - our coaching and counselling, our networking events, our specialized workshops, our mentors, and our research are all designed for enabling anyone who walks through our doors to navigate Quebec's employment and entrepreneurship landscape. This year, our big focus has been on opening doors for women to succeed in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

We completed our 3-year mandate on advancing systemic change for Women in STEM and one of the highlights of the year was the closing event that we held at SAP Labs Canada in February.

We were honoured to have been joined by Canadian-Iranian engineer and leading philanthropist Dr. Gina Cody, whose keynote address validated our principles and our initiative. We had the pleasure of presenting our partner companies in the local technology sector, GSoft, IC Axon (a Division of GP Canada Co), and OneSpan, each of which tested new approaches and practices for opening doors and supporting their female talent.

The event included a fascinating presentation of lessons learned and a number of recommendations that were put forward to ensure that women can not only be included but also thrive in Quebec's STEM industries. YES continues to be a leader in this area as a member of the National Committee on Gender Equality, as a base for women-focused initiatives and as a knowledge centre, having launched a website providing businesses with resources that they can use to continue pushing forward, breaking down barriers and helping women to advance in STEM.

Building on our credibility and networking achievements, we successfully applied to the federal government's "Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES) Ecosystem Fund" and we were able to begin planning a new 3-year initiative focused on advancing women in entrepreneurship, ELLEvate Women Entrepreneurs. YES was one of only nine organizations funded in Quebec, and we are the only official language minority organization in the group. We will be able to help over 1000 English-speaking women in Quebec over the course of 3 years. ELLEvate will give women entrepreneurs the ecosystem they need, allowing them to be part of a self-supporting network, helping them to acquire know-how and confidence through coaching and mentorships, and opening pathways to funding. We are delighted to be creating much-needed entrepreneurial opportunities for English-speaking women all over Quebec.

Over the course of its history, YES has enjoyed a strong reputation for its partnerships with English-

language employment service providers across the province. YES recently headed up the community employment roundtable that brought these organizations together for self-support, sharing experiences and voicing community concerns. The Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers came to YES to expand on this roundtable by creating a Quebec-wide coalition of English-language employment service providers. In November, this new coalition, PERT (Provincial Employment Roundtable), hosted a keynote conference, Closing the 12k Gap: Improving Employment for Quebec's English-Speaking Community, aiming to build a new partnership between our community and the government of Quebec to improve the employment picture for English-speakers.

Attended by over fifty organizations, the conference led to thirty-nine recommendations. Quebec's Minister of Employment, the Hon. Jean Boulet, and the Premier's Parliamentary Secretary for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers, Christopher Skeete, attended. Min. Boulet announced the creation of a new government advisory committee for the English-speaking community that will work closely with the government to ensure that more English-speakers access jobs. It is very encouraging that the government has committed to working more closely with our community at a much higher level than ever seen before. We look forward to cultivating closer ties with the Quebec government and all decision-makers that impact our community's prospects.



DR. GINA CODY MEETS WITH MEMBERS OF THE ADVANCING WOMEN IN STEM COMMITTEE

# Breaking the Isolation of Job Search

For the past 25 years, YES's job search program has been equipping Quebec's English-speaking population with the skills they need to become self-sufficient in their job search. In the 21st century, very few individuals can expect to have a job for life, so we seek to equip our clients with job search tools that they can use throughout their career. We take a holistic approach to the job search journey, helping our clients to work out what success means to them. Our clients feel empowered as we guide them through the process of forging their future path.

YES provides accessible support through flexible coaching and online workshops. Our coaches deliver a personalized service. We take the time to listen closely, pinpointing our clients' needs and working together to find the right solution and the best fit.

Looking for a job can be a very isolating experience and being out of work can lead to feelings of disconnection. YES provides a centre for people to come to when they're struggling to find their way. The centre provides a safe space where those who may feel disconnected can engage and become part of a community. This gives job seekers a support network that fosters connection and a sense of belonging.

In the past year, YES has helped more than 1,000 clients to find employment, building and growing valuable networks in the process. Much of our work in 2019-2020 involved helping newcomers to get their true value across to employers. By providing language courses and internships within francophone business environments, YES bridges the gap between the array of talent in the English-speaking community and the many jobs that require bilingualism. Many of our clients are highly educated and highly skilled but have trouble ticking the boxes to secure work in their field.

Alongside personalized coaching sessions, events such as our Career and Job Fair Mixer give our clients the chance to speak directly with employers. Of course, the YES team is always on hand, cheerleading throughout the job fair and bolstering our clients' self-confidence.

Our February hiring event at St-Jax was a huge success, with many job offers made. Over 20 well-known companies were in attendance, including Shopify, BAM Strategy, and Lufa Farms. These face-to-face experiences help our clients to move away from the anxiety of box checking and move toward a bright future.



# 2019-20 Job Search Program Impact

**1490**

**CLIENTS SERVED**

**6492**

**SERVICES ACCESSED**

**2740**

**JOB SEARCH  
COUNSELING SESSIONS**

**3077**

**JOB SEARCH  
WORKSHOP ATTENDEES**

**83%**

**SUCCEEDED IN GETTING  
A JOB OR RETURNING  
TO SCHOOL**



# Job Seeker Client Story

DARNELL,  
NETWORK SPECIALIST

**Congratulations on your new role, Darnell! It's so great to hear that YES was able to help you. How was your experience with YES's job search program?**

**Where did it all begin?**

Thank you! It all began just after I graduated from university with a degree in Electrical Engineering. I was actively looking for work but I was hitting a brick wall and not getting many responses. That's when my older sister recommended YES because she'd had a great experience with the job search program. The first interaction I had with YES was at a free workshop that they were running on how to optimize your LinkedIn profile. At that event, I found out that 1:1 coaching was a possibility and I signed up on the spot. After a couple of weeks, I sat down with my coach, Umit, and began to understand what I needed to do to move forward.



**Did you apply for many jobs while you were searching?**

I believe that I applied for around 80 positions while working with YES. I took the process very seriously. Once I had transformed my application writing process with the help of my coach, Umit, I began to notice a much better response to my CVs and letters and I soon began getting interviews.

**Which experiences particularly stood out to you during your time working with YES?**

The coaching itself was the most transformative part, especially the first coaching session, which was also the longest session. Getting to meet and talk to someone in my field who had been through the same process and succeeded was also very impactful. That advice made a huge difference.

**So how's the new job?  
Do you feel it's a good fit?**

It's great! I have been able to experience life in the office as well as remote work and I am very happy with the role. I have made friends within my team and I am glad that I have been able to work remotely during the pandemic. Around the time when I was offered my current job, I was also offered a few other positions, so I was fortunate enough to have a choice between a few offers. I compared all the roles and chose the best one for me.

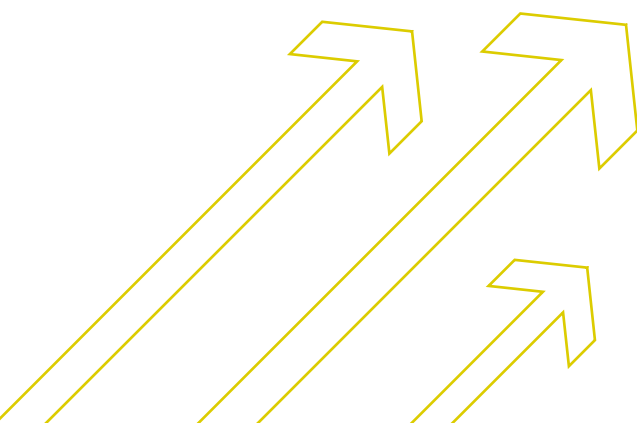
**Do you feel that you will be able to apply what you learned at YES to future job searches?**

Yes, thanks to the coaching, mentorship, and the free workshops I attended, I now know how to present myself in CVs and cover letters. I know how to sell myself, positioning myself as the best candidate, and I know how to ace interviews. This is going to serve me well for life.

**Would you recommend YES to other people?**

Definitely. In fact, I already do. What's great about YES is that the coaches make a real effort to find industry-specific information for their clients. Umit listened to me and tailored everything to my specific individual career path. Nothing was generic.

The level of support was outstanding. Honestly, I was surprised that this level of support exists. They help you to stand out, to use body language to present your best self, and they give you all the tools you need to be successful - including telling you what not to do! I would definitely recommend YES to anyone looking for work.



# SKILLS LINK

**“I WANTED TO THANK YOU GUYS AGAIN. I WAS IN A REALLY BAD PLACE WHEN I WAS IN SKILLS LINK AND IT REALLY HELPED ME FIND THE CONFIDENCE TO WORK AGAIN.”**

For many young people in Quebec, accessing employment is a struggle due to social and economic barriers. These barriers may be caused by challenges associated with disabilities, coming from a single parent family, not having completed high school, or coming from a marginalized community. The Skills Link program aims to provide a supportive and non-judgmental environment to facilitate skills development for unemployed young people facing barriers such as these.

Our 2019 cohort was very diverse, with 67% of participants identifying as having disability, 35% identifying as being from a visible minority, 34% being new arrivals to Quebec, and 19% of participants identifying as being part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Thanks to a federal government grant that formed part of the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy, our 2019 cohort undertook 8 weeks of paid skills training and coaching, followed by a 12-week work placement within a Quebec-based company.

**This most recent cohort was the latest of 5 cohorts who have completed this program and we have seen a high level of success.**

## **OVERALL:**

**93%**

**OF THE PROGRAM'S PARTICIPANTS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE SKILLS BUILDING TRAINING**

**85%**

**WERE PLACED IN WORK EXPERIENCES**

**92%**

**SUCCEEDED IN FINDING AND KEEPING EMPLOYMENT AFTER THE SUBSIDY PERIOD**

**6%**

**ARE RETURNING TO SCHOOL**

Through their training, participants have the opportunity to interact professionally with others, improving their communication skills and building self-confidence in the process. In addition to providing the participants with experiences that they will be able to draw on in interviews, their work placements enable them to broaden their knowledge of different career possibilities.

We are delighted to report that the Skills Link program has garnered a 79% success rate and that we are able to continue offering the program under the new name of JEME in 2020 following a transition period as the management of the program has shifted from the Federal Government to the Quebec Government. We are looking forward to welcoming our new cohort and to continuing this important work.





# Democratizing Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs are always trying to remove pain points in society and in the market. By supporting entrepreneurs, YES is helping this innovation to continue. We can overcome challenges together by working together. YES takes a very democratic view of entrepreneurship, supporting entrepreneurs with their business ventures at any stage of development, from ideation to scaling and supporting existing businesses. Across the province, we are expanding our suite of workshops to fit a broad range of needs. Over the past year, we have placed a strong focus on digital services and resources to increase access to entrepreneurship in the regions, while continuing to help our clients to build resiliency as well as providing workshops to boost financial management and legal skillsets.

With over 60 evening events, 2019-2020 was a year full of opportunities for local entrepreneurs to join in and get involved. Our Entrepreneurship Speaker Series was a particular highlight. Covering a variety of topics and themes, this series offered attendees opportunities to network with like-minded people and be inspired by guest speakers from a range of different sectors.

Shopify's Montreal office hosted our most recent event on March 5th, featuring several leading women entrepreneurs who shared their personal experiences in disrupting and transforming the status quo of their industry. We were fortunate to have been joined by Maya Toussaint from Rio Tinto, Cathy and Susy Imbriglio, who run a metal machining and welding company (Imbritech Industries), serial entrepreneur Cheryl Tom, and Coffee Queen, Taïna Chalifoux from Di Napoli. These exceptional women entrepreneurs generously shared tips and tricks that have driven them to success, inspiring Quebec's women entrepreneurs of the future. This motivational event provided the perfect moment to announce our upcoming ELLEvate Women Entrepreneurs Pre-Accelerator, which is set to transform the business ventures of 10 women entrepreneurs over a 3-month period. This forms part of our new 3-year ELLEvate program which we are spring boarding into following the successful completion of our Women in STEM mandate. YES's initiatives continue to be a catalyst for change, promoting equity in entrepreneurship. Engaging women and those from communities that are underrepresented in business leads to increased innovation and ultimately a much stronger economy in Quebec.

By showcasing successful role models from diverse backgrounds and providing resources to overcome accessibility barriers to entrepreneurs from marginalized communities, YES aims to broaden access to entrepreneurship. Alongside individual coaching, workshops, video tutorials, and events, we are also conducting research that focuses on organizational governance and innovation models for SMEs. Entrepreneurship is a huge contributor to the vitality of communities all over Quebec and we are committed to bringing down barriers and scaling growth year after year.

# 2019-20 Entrepreneurship Program Impact

**2366**

**CLIENTS SERVED**

**86**

**VOLUNTEER  
GUEST SPEAKERS**

**5764**

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
COACHING SESSIONS**

**2709**

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
WORKSHOP ATTENDEES**

**26,962**

**KM TRAVELLED  
PROVINCE-WIDE**

# Stuntwoman-turned-producer

JANINE FROM CHICKEN AND CAT PRODUCTIONS SHARES HOW YES HELPED WITH HER CAREER CHANGE.

Janine Parkinson is a YES client who has been working with an Entrepreneurship Business Coach over the past year. We asked Janine about her experiences with YES since she moved to Montreal from Toronto and decided to switch career paths, moving from stunt work to starting her own production company, Chicken and Cat Productions.

## What sparked your idea for Chicken and Cat Productions?

Working a range of different jobs in the film industry, you begin to notice that a lot needs to change. I did stunts for over 10 years and it's a very male-dominated industry with many glaring inequalities. I began to realize that things in film and in TV don't just change spontaneously, you have to actually be the change. Rather than writing a short-lived opinion piece about the issues in the film and TV industry, I decided to create my own company based on the values and principles that I wanted to see. I decided to become a changemaker. I wanted to create a production company that would practice diverse casting, that would be inclusive - so I did. I wanted to open up opportunities for those who are often underrepresented in film. I wanted to tell stories through my (often comedic) films that can lead to change in society - entertaining social commentaries with a real purpose.





## Did you look up to any female producers as role models?

Like in stunt work, directing and producing are still very male-dominated areas of the film industry -there is an unequal ratio of female to male CMPA Producers working in North America, particularly in Canada. That said, I have always looked up to Wendy Grean and Denise Robert on the Canadian side. I am looking forward to a day when being a female producer won't be unusual anymore. I am actively driving change by hiring women to work with Chicken and Cat. I'm also very mindful that other groups are also underrepresented in film so not only do I practice diverse casting, I also hire people who are often underrepresented to work on my sets. I try to build bridges between the anglophone and francophone communities in my hiring. I have been lifted by the strength and courage of other women - especially Angelica Lisk-Hann, the first female black stunt coordinator in Canada, who helped me to gain a voice as a woman in the industry. Inspired by Angelica, I decided to become courageous with my own projects and transition into the production side of film and television. I want to give back by ensuring proper equal pay for everyone who works for me. I also want to inspire others by ensuring that my crews get mentorship opportunities on set and the chance to try new things. This is pretty rare. We can all teach each other something, and I encourage that.

## How has YES helped you to further your goals?

Through YES, I have received work-specific French language training, I have participated in workshops on networking, data analytics, and grant applications, and I have received expert business coaching. Through this coaching, I gained the confidence that I needed to pursue my own business bilingually. I created a business plan and began approaching francophone companies that I would never previously have reached out to. Moving to Montreal, shifting career paths, and starting over again was incredibly daunting, especially since my lack of French was holding me back when I arrived. It may sound dramatic but YES saved my life, because before I approached them, I was running out of options.

## What do you think is special about YES?

YES delivered exactly what I needed and I began seeing results almost as soon as I started. As a newcomer to Montreal, YES helped me sort out a job, build a network for myself, and introduced me to fellow entrepreneurs, some of them female entrepreneurs about my age who I had a lot in common with - they wanted to be changemakers too. YES is very special, particularly because of the diverse community that uses its services. Through the language classes, I met people from a range of different countries. Whoever you are and wherever you're from, YES is unique in Quebec because it bridges the gap for English-speakers in the province, giving them the confidence and the tools they need to reach out and get bilingual opportunities, which they may initially have stayed away from. Thanks to YES, English speakers living in Quebec can shine.

## What's coming up next for Chicken and Cat Productions?

Following our short film, Le Parking, which premiered at Kino, a feature film is now in the works. We want to showcase the linguistic diversity in Canada and ensure that our films retain a strong Canadian essence. As with all Chicken and Cat Productions, we want our audience to see themselves or people they know in the characters. For us, that means ensuring equity and casting people of different weights, different ethnicities, different ages, and so on. 90% of the cast of our upcoming feature film will be over the age of 60. Another ground-breaking aspect of our upcoming productions is that we are aiming for zero waste sets. We want to set a precedent!

 **CHICKENANDCATPRODUCTIONS**  
 **CHICKENANDCAT.COM**



# Helping Quebec's Creative Capital Grow

English-language business support for artists is in high demand in Quebec. There's certainly no shortage of talent in the province but business skills typically aren't taught in art school. This means that artists often emerge without the knowledge and skills they need to transform their talent into a revenue stream. YES provides individual coaching, mentorships, workshops, and events to facilitate the business development of English-speaking artists in Quebec.

Quebec's English-speaking artist community is, in fact, a community of communities. At YES, we celebrate this diversity, encouraging artists to gain visibility for their art and giving them the opportunity to create sustainable income from their work. YES gives artists practical guidance: from financial tips and grant writing assistance to resiliency training and legal or intellectual property workshops.

YES is based in the heart of Montreal, a metropolis that is internationally renowned for being a beacon for the arts. Artists from all over Canada and all over the world make their home in Montreal, choosing this city for its wealth of opportunities and creative spaces. By listening to the needs of our diverse communities, we can create the right kinds of opportunities for our clients to grow their networks, gain experience, and

develop new skills. In 2019-2020, such opportunities have included our Connecting Creative Youth initiative and What The Pop, where our clients get to experience what it's like to set up and run a pop-up, both showcasing and selling their art. Unfortunately, our annual Artists' Conference, which was set to be one of the most memorable and dynamic yet, had to be cancelled as it was scheduled to occur when the province shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both in Montreal and in the regions, the English-speaking community plays a significant role in Quebec's creative economy, a billion-dollar industry that is frequently underestimated. Without the arts, we would have no movies, no video games, and the face of tech would look very different. Alongside our hard-working partners, YES is a key stakeholder that is making a huge impact in the arts. Created in 2000, we are proud that our artist program has grown tremendously over its history. As we look forward to the future of YES, we hope to be able to include more niche programming for artists at different stages of their creative business ventures. Artists are already major contributors to Quebec's economy as a whole - let's bolster that and foster the growth of Quebec's creative economy.

# 2019-20 Artist Program Impact

655

CLIENTS SERVED

266

NEW CLIENTS WELCOMED

638

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

741

ARTIST COACHING SESSIONS

## Growing a network through YES

Drawing on the sustained support of a network helps creative businesses succeed. YES helps artists to grow their networks through exposure at its conferences and initiatives like What The Pop.

## Finding your team through YES

Even creative professionals who work alone can find their team. From the person who supplies paint to that buddy who has a DSLR, artists need never feel alone and they can rally the help of YES as part of their team.

## Turn art into revenue with YES

From finding sources of funding to getting help with strategy and scaling, YES helps artists to create sustained sources of income through their work - bridging the gap between art and business.

## Turning vulnerabilities into a source of power

Being part of a marginalized community comes with certain vulnerabilities. We show artists how to make income through telling their unique stories, helping artists to map out their ventures and find revenue streams to decrease vulnerabilities.



# Meet the winner of YES's first Iris Unger Recognition Award

SINTHUSHA KANDIAH

This year, our first-ever Iris Unger Recognition Award was awarded to Sinthusha Kandiah, whose foundation, Divinart, raises money for underserved local and global communities.

Before we begin our interview, I want to express how grateful I am to my ancestors. I also want to acknowledge the indigenous and black ancestors of Turtle Island, who have lost their lives and have experienced pain and toil. As a settler, I am committed to continuing the lifelong fight for justice led by my indigenous and black kin on this land. I owe this to them as I pursue my dreams and acknowledge the privileges that I have today.

**Thank you, Sinthusha. Congratulations on being the first-ever recipient of the Iris Unger Recognition Award. How does it feel to have been recognized in this way?**

I am honoured to have been chosen as the recipient of this award - it was a wonderful surprise. Offering marudhani/mehndi/henna art, sharing those blessings, and making a difference through supporting local and global initiatives is a calling for me. It's something very close to my heart that allows me to foster a connection with other humans. This traditional art allows me to connect with my ancestors - I feel that every henna stroke comes with the blessings of my ancestors and I can feel their resilience. It has always been my aspiration to use the proceeds from my art to empower people and give back. I am proud of myself for persevering and working tirelessly to bring this foundation to fruition. I am proud of how far I've come as a woman of colour in a world that often doesn't feel like it's made for me. I hope that my story can inspire others and show others that you can make a difference if you have a vision, a passion, and the drive to persevere.



## How did your art begin?

I have been drawing and painting since I was a little girl and art has always been my way of expressing myself, expressing my emotions. Art has always been my outlet. I have explored and cultivated a deepened connection for the traditional art of marudhani/henna through the women in my family and beyond. The plant is well-known for its healing and cooling properties as my Amma and Ammama (grandmas) would tell me when they used it in their homelands.

## When was Divinart born?

I wrote the idea and name of Divinart down on a piece of paper when I was 17 in my last year of high school. I put it in a drawer and didn't look at it until two years later when it dawned on me that I was still passionate about making a positive difference through my art and through my henna art, particularly. At first, I experienced a lot of pushback from my parents; transitioning from CEGEP to a science degree at McGill University while having to balance the life of a social entrepreneur in the non-profit sector was not easy, especially as a first generation Canadian. But with time, I worked my way to making Divinart what it is today. The foundation has always felt like my precious baby and thanks to the help and support of those around me, including the support I have received from YES, it has grown very quickly over the past few years. Although initially worried about the artist/social entrepreneurship path, my parents are very proud of what I have achieved and I wouldn't be where I am today without them.

## How was your experience with YES?

YES has helped me so much. From receiving business coaching from Elizabeth to participating in many workshops offered by them, YES has played a huge part in making the Divinart Foundation the success it has become today. As a racialized youth, I appreciate that YES makes resources available, accessible, and affordable to those who might not otherwise have access to such resources to start something and grow it into a successful venture.

## What is Divinart currently working on and what do you foresee for the future?

A typical month usually involves raising money through bridal henna bookings, along with party henna, which I truly love. It's a privilege and honour to adorn my clients on their special day, and importantly, through Divinart Foundation, to also be a spark for change in the wedding industry, which often epitomizes capitalization. Over the years, a lot of the funds that the foundation has raised have gone to projects in Montreal and war-affected regions of Sri Lanka. My main focus this past year has been on a project in Hyderabad, India that involves helping women in slums to become financially independent. My other focus this past year has been on a project in Montreal, helping women who have experienced conjugal violence. I am working hard to continue raising funds to help empower women and individuals locally and abroad. I am looking forward to continuing to grow Divinart Foundation and to giving back to communities both near and far.



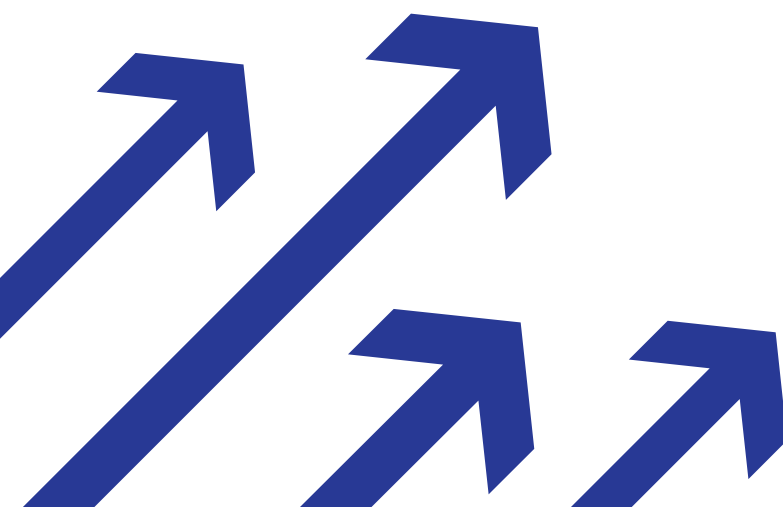
**DIVINART\_FOUNDATION**



**DIVINARTFOUNDATION**



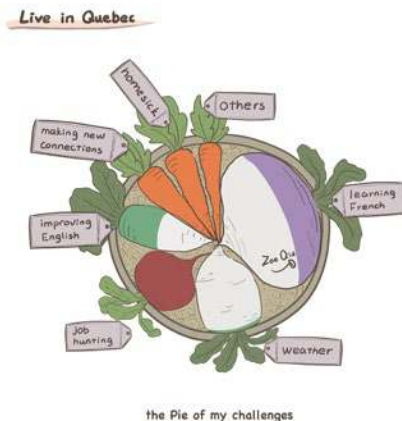
**DIVINARTFOUNDATION.ORG**



# CONNECTING CREATIVE YOUTH THROUGH THE ARTS

Emerging artists flourish when given the tools and resources they need to develop and succeed. CCY 2019 welcomed a group of budding creative entrepreneurs who took part in a variety of group activities, seminars, and one-on-one coaching sessions. They worked on goal setting, networking, grant writing, arts branding, and varying their revenue streams.

The program saw small cohorts of participating artists come together and get connected to the resources and networks available to them across the province. At CCY 2019, friendships were struck, connections were made, and networks were grown. The program aims to bring people together through art, building confidence together within a supportive learning environment.



WORK BY:  
**ZOE QIU**  
@ZOE.QIU0630

Zoe Qiu is a Montreal-based artist who uses her illustrations to chronicle her experiences as an immigrant in Quebec.



WORK BY:  
**MARTA**  
@STUDIOBARNOWL

Using primarily watercolours and a dip pen, Marta is interested in how her art could help educate about other cultures, the natural world, and environmental conservation.



WORK BY:  
**ALYSSA RAE**  
@ARTTODAYBYALYSSARAE

A visual artist specializing in oil and acrylic painting, Alyssa Rae's work explores the themes of positive energy, self-discovery and freedom.



A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair and large gold earrings, focused on applying henna to her arm. She is holding a henna cone in her mouth and using a small applicator to draw a butterfly design on her forearm. Another henna design, a leaf, is visible on her lower arm. The background is bright and out of focus.

**“BY APPLYING  
CREATIVITY  
TO A HARD  
CHALLENGE,  
SOMETHING  
BEAUTIFUL  
CAN EMERGE”**



# Supporter Story

TAREK RIMAN,  
CEO, FOUNDER/STRATEGIST  
AT CAPTAIN.COM

Originally from Lebanon, Cap.TaiM CEO Tarek Riman is a digital marketing, analytics, and SEO expert who has been volunteering his time and expertise at YES for the past 4 years. He has delivered a range of excellent SEO, data analytics, and digital marketing workshops at YES over the years. He also keeps the YES team up to date with cutting edge digital marketing knowledge and builds custom dashboards to help YES grow. Tarek first walked through the doors of YES 10 years ago as a client. Here, Tarek shares why he supports YES.

“The resources that YES provides to job seekers and students alike are exceptional. I have first-hand experience of what it’s like to arrive in a new city where everything works differently. I first came to Montreal as an international student at Concordia - that’s how I first discovered YES. YES helped me to create the CV that would set me on my path to success. I want to see others benefit from the exponential value that YES has brought me.

A few years ago, YES was looking for someone to run an SEO and analytics workshop and I jumped at the chance to give back. Since then, I have run a number of workshops in the entrepreneurship program and more recently, I have been coaching YES’s team internally. I want to help YES to reach out to and work with more entrepreneurs. I do this both by helping YES to optimize its digital marketing processes and by equipping their coaches with the latest industry knowledge that can then trickle down to their clients. These days, my focus is on the educational angle of data analytics and SEO in digital marketing. Many organizations are unaware that analytics makes up two thirds of digital marketing.

You have to go digital if you want to survive. When it comes to analytics, you have to prepare, implement, then measure and test, then go full circle again. I have found everyone at YES to be hungry for this type of knowledge. I deliver corporate training and

university courses on digital marketing at McGill and Concordia and all over the world and I have to say that YES’s entrepreneurship clients are among the most enthusiastic and eager to acquire knowledge. It’s a pleasure to work with such hungry and passionate entrepreneurs and I enjoy being part of the community at YES.

YES runs fantastic events and I attend as many of them as I can. I want to spread the word about YES because I want to generate more exposure for their exceptional services. If I could change anything about YES, I would make it so that every new immigrant, every new international student, and every new graduate would receive a pamphlet about YES’s services when they arrive in the country or when they graduate. I recommend YES to all my digital marketing students and to the budding entrepreneurs who come to me needing an extra helping hand. In the entrepreneurship space, I would like to see greater cooperation between entrepreneurship programs across institutions.

It would be great to share resources and pool knowledge to grow a bigger community. This way, everyone can shine. It would be great for every accelerator to know about YES. I aim to continue building awareness so that everyone can benefit from the resources that are out there to help them. YES transforms lives and I am proud to be part of that.”





# Supporter Story

LIESL BARRELL,  
CEO AT THIRD WUNDER



With a background in the arts, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a passion for helping fellow humans upskill, Liesl has used her expertise to contribute to YES's Skills Link, entrepreneurship, job search, and artist programs. Liesl experienced the positive impact of YES herself, having turned to YES as a job search client at a pivotal point in her own career. Thanks to YES, Liesl was able to kick-start her marketing career with key connections and a growing network from YES's workshops and events. Since her career took off, she has been giving back to YES as a speaker, workshop leader, and all-round champion.



“My relationship with YES began at a stage in my career when I needed to pivot toward something more stable. I wanted to transition into full-time work in the world of marketing but like many of YES’s clients, I was struggling to make connections and land a job through sending cold emails and CVs. In response to this predicament, my job search coach Annalise suggested that I attend a speed networking event to actually come face to face with potential employers. It worked! Once potential employers could meet me in person, they were able to see that I had strong potential.

Getting this foot in the door was key. Thanks to that particular event, I not only found myself an immediate long-term job, I made other key contacts that would turn out to shape the first four or five years of my marketing career. I still owe many of the wonderful connections I have today to that one event at YES, so the return on investment for me as a job seeker was extremely high.

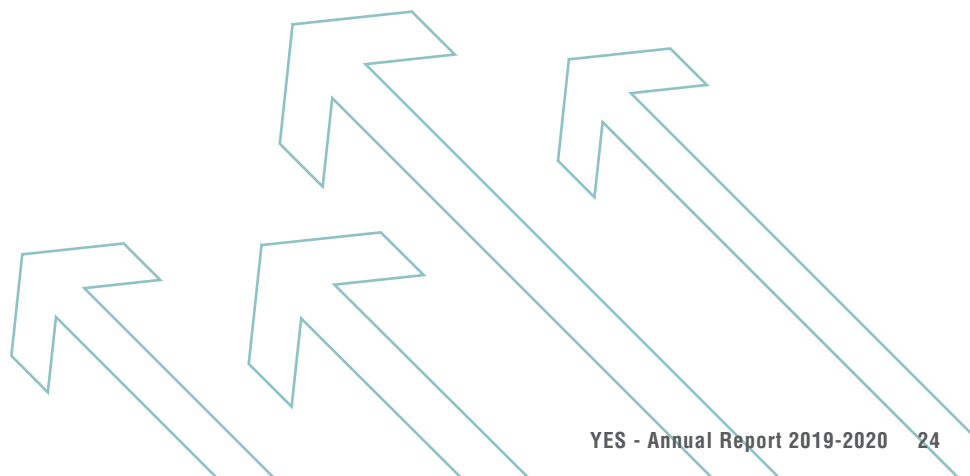
I still remember a piece of advice that was given to me by Annalise during one of our coaching sessions - she encouraged me to make a list of my top 5 ideal (pie in the sky) Montreal employers and to work towards making my dream job a reality. One contact I met at the same fateful networking event, was a partner at my top “pie in the sky” company. Though they did not interview me at the time, I actually kept his business card for a couple of years following the event.

Once I was ready for a new role, I reached out to him and found my next big opportunity, where I was eventually promoted to supervisor. After a

couple of years there, I moved on to a director position and eventually, I jumped into the world of entrepreneurship. With my business partner, we sought the services of YES Montreal once again to develop our business plan for Third Wunder, which is now in its sixth year of operations. I know that even if I decided to pivot once again, YES Montreal would still have my back. Who knows? Maybe one day I’ll make use of YES artist program to get the full set of YES experiences!

In addition to experiencing YES as a client, volunteering for YES has been a great joy for me. A particular highlight has been delivering digital skills workshops as part of the Skills Link program, which helps at-risk youth to move beyond barriers and forge a path for themselves. As well as being involved in YES’s programs, I had the pleasure to speak at the inaugural Tune In To YES event, giving my YEstimonial about the difficulties of job seeking in Montreal and how YES helped me break into my career. I am particularly proud of my work on the committees for the women in tech initiatives that YES has run.

I am passionate about encouraging women in tech, especially in my role as Executive Director of Montreal Girl Geeks where we aim to make tech more accessible. YES shares this goal and I am excited for future opportunities to contribute to YES’s invaluable work across their programs. I am living proof that YES is unique in its ability to profoundly connect people. I am deeply grateful for all the wonderful relationships I’ve built through YES as a client and as a supporter, and I hope that this amazing community will continue to grow for decades to come.”



A portrait of Cindy Fagen, a woman with blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt with a white geometric pattern.

# Corporate Sponsor: SAP

CINDY FAGEN,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
SAP LABS CANADA

Cindy Fagen, Managing Director for SAP Labs Canada, is a proud YES board member. We spoke to Cindy about her involvement as a supporter of YES. Speaking on behalf of SAP Labs Canada, Cindy also shares the reasons why SAP chooses to support YES. We are very grateful to Cindy and to SAP for the longstanding partnership that they maintain with YES and for all the work that they do to give back to our shared community.

“Both as the Managing Director for SAP Labs Canada and as a Montreal-based female leader, I am very proud to be associated with YES. SAP’s pillars of focus align strongly with YES’s work, particularly when it comes to driving change in equity, diversity and inclusion in Quebec’s entrepreneurial landscape. With its impressive outreach and exceptional programming, YES continues to drive positive change year over year.

When I first set out on my entrepreneurial path, I discovered that working on a business venture can feel lonely when you are operating alone in your basement. Getting out there and connecting at events can be a lifeline to entrepreneurs. Whether such events spark ideas or simply serve as encouragement to keep going, coming together and meeting others who are going through the same thing is essential to sustainable success when building a startup. I am encouraged to see that the local support systems have grown to encourage today’s diverse range of entrepreneurs to explore new ideas and be creative in business. I am proud to see the vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem that exists in Montreal today. YES has played an important role in this shift.

Entrepreneurship and inclusion are cornerstones of SAP’s culture. Following our involvement with YES’s Advancing Systemic Change for Women in STEM initiative, our relationship with YES continues with the ELLEvate program, whose accelerator echoes

our own internal goals. We have our own accelerator internally at SAP to actively encourage our employees to collaborate on new venture ideas. We recognize the value of experimenting to ultimately lead to better solutions. We also recognize that you can’t build great solutions unless you bring diverse thinking around the table. This includes generational, gender, differently abled and cultural diversity.

I had the privilege of being one of 150 women leaders chosen from across Canada to work on advocating for policy changes, building intersectional leadership, and taking collective action to advance gender equality. I feel that it’s important to lean in and push for change and I am grateful that YES has given me a platform to continue this work and that SAP stands with me in upholding these values.

As a YES board member, Entrepreneurship Committee member, speaker, and leader, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute alongside my fellow board members and help YES drive the future. I am excited to continue advocating for policies which promote an inclusive employment and entrepreneurial landscape. The power of what YES brings to Montreal is still largely untapped. As more corporations start to understand the power of what YES does for the community, it is incumbent upon them to get involved, give back, and be part of the work of YES. SAP has tapped into that and I hope other companies will follow suit.”



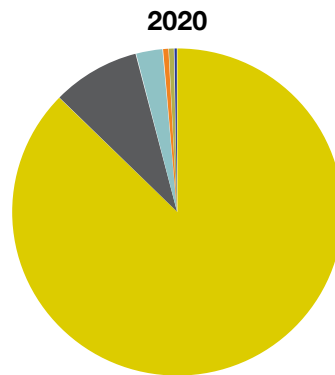
# Youth Employment Services Foundation

## STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

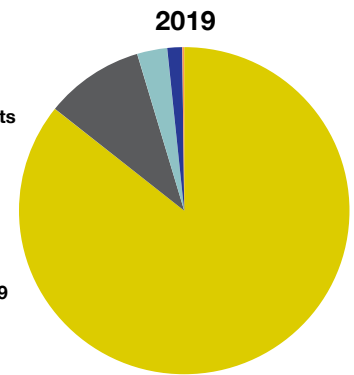
For the year ending March 31

### Revenues

Grants	\$2,197,074
Donations and Fundraising Events	217,082
Workshops and Services	65,957
Conferences	14,043
Government Subsidies - Covid 19	13,814
Interest	8,103



Grants	\$1,991,856
Donations and Fundraising Events	225,642
Workshops and Services	68,402
Conferences	34,090
Government Subsidies - Covid 19	0
Interest	4,195



**2,516,073**

**2,324,185**

### Expenditures

	2020	2019
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	1,681,215	1,595,365
Rent	165,611	160,865
Office Administration	190,081	127,973
Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) Project	61,180	44,189
Women Based Project	27,254	16,610
Regional Project	42,116	38,663
Research Project	12,335	18,840
Youth Initiative	0	7,690
Publicity and Promotion	115,789	79,863
Workshops, Events and Services	31,125	39,371
Conferences	1,429	10,809
Fundraising	27,661	20,436
Sales Tax - Non reimbursed	49,350	40,986
Amortization	21,869	26,079
Interest and Bank Charges	4,418	4,336

**2,431,433**

**2,232,075**

### Excess of Revenue over Expenditures

**\$84,640**

**\$92,110**

A copy of the audited financial statements is available upon request.



# Thank you to our 2019-20 Funders and Partners

Our programs are made possible with the support of:



The Eric T. Webster Foundation - The John Dobson Foundation - The Peacock Family Foundation  
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**Thank you to all of the donors, speakers and volunteers who made our 2019-2020 year a success. We couldn't have done it without you!**

[HTTPS://WWW.YESMONTREAL.CA/EN/YES/PARTNERSHIPS/GET\\_INVOLVED/THANK\\_YOU](https://www.yesmontreal.ca/en/yes/partnerships/get_involved/thank_you)

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**Members of the Roundtable Committee include over  
15 employment service provider organizations**

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