



# INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





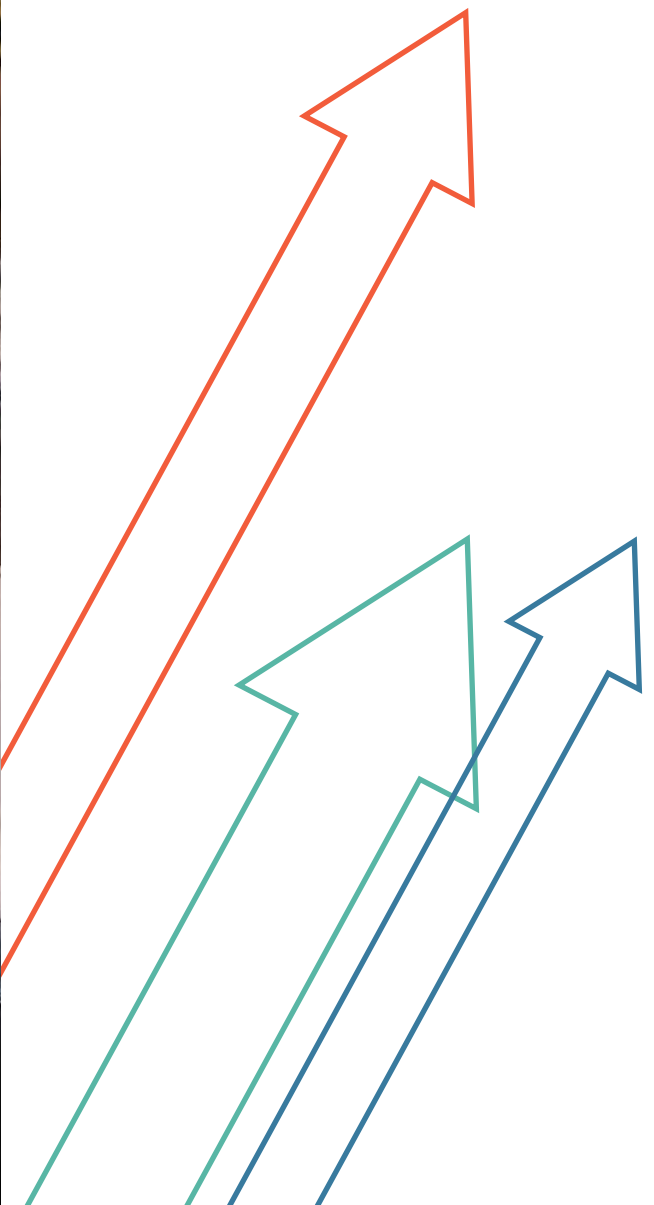
# MISSION

Since 1995, YES Employment + Entrepreneurship has helped English-speakers across Quebec to realize their potential. YES is a registered charity with a mission to enrich the community by providing English-language support services and participating in community-building initiatives. We help Quebecers find employment and start and grow businesses.



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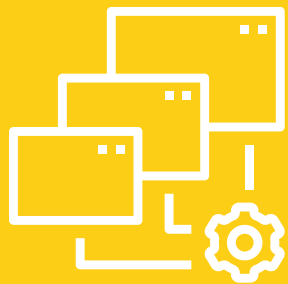
# ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT



CLIENTS SERVED  
**3,220** +18%  
YOY



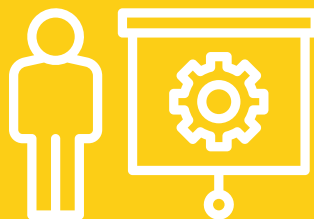
TOTAL VOLUNTEERS  
**178**



SERVICES DELIVERED  
**17,632** +18%  
YOY



NETWORKING EVENTS  
**16**



WORKSHOPS  
**973**



WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE  
**6,705**

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

# BONNIE ROBINSON

As we reflect on the past year at YES, I am filled with immense pride for what we have accomplished together. Our theme this year, "Investing in Our Future," has truly come to life through the extraordinary efforts of our team, our partners, our dedicated volunteers, and our steadfast supporters.

I want to extend our heartfelt thanks to Aki Tchitacov, who retired as our Executive Director on March 31st after nearly five years of dedicated service. Under his leadership, YES achieved significant progress, enhancing our community impact.

This year, YES delivered over 17,000 services, including numerous events, workshops, and one-on-one counselling and coaching sessions. We remain committed to enriching the community by providing English-language support services to help Quebecers find employment, start, and grow businesses. As we continue to offer these essential supports to jobseekers, entrepreneurs, and artists, we are also looking ahead, focusing on capacity-building, strategic planning, and new partnerships that will benefit us for years to come.

A highlight of the year was being awarded funding through the Community Services Recovery Fund, which has enhanced our capacity for digital initiatives through administrative improvements and eLearning. We have also formed exciting new partnerships with York University and Nunavik Investment Corporation to expand our entrepreneurship support, and we have strengthened existing relationships with pro bono partners such as McGill University Legal Clinic, Avens, and Montreal Financial to provide vital services to entrepreneurs.

The past year also saw the inception of the new Corporate Engagement Committee and the PhilanthroPitch event, paving the way for innovative approaches to philanthropy and community engagement. Additionally, the creation of a new Government Relations Committee will help us further our mission and drive impactful changes through advocacy.

With this momentum, I am thrilled to welcome Marina Boulos-Winton as our Acting Executive Director. Marina brings a wealth of experience in the nonprofit sector, most recently at Chez Doris, where she successfully increased their revenues significantly during her tenure. Her proven track record and leadership will be instrumental as we continue to build on the strong foundation laid by those before her.

I would also like to acknowledge the exceptional collaboration, creativity, and grit that have driven our success this year. The dedication to our mission demonstrated by everyone involved truly forms the backbone of YES.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment. Together, we are building a brighter future for our community.





# EMPLOYMENT RECAP

This year, the Employment team continued to build out cohort-based programming options with the addition of the Career Readiness Employability Advancement Through Education (CREATE) program, thanks to the support of the Community Empowerment Literacy Initiative. This all-new paid program offered participating youth 12 weeks of employability and graphic design skills training and experience. At the end of the program, participants walked away with job search skills, including how to craft a marketable CV and how to communicate effectively in English and French, as well as graphic design skills and a portfolio of their work.

At the same time, the team dug into developing programming and tools to support a wide range of job seekers through the Resources, Employment and Career Help (REACH) program. This free program offers a comprehensive line up of options for today's jobseekers, from specialized interactive group sessions to one-on-one career counseling appointments.

Other highlights of the year included the Employment Open House, which welcomed jobseekers into the YES Centre for an afternoon of networking and speed coaching, and a new French for the Workforce training level—High Level Beginner—that gave jobseekers the additional French skills they need to confidently put their best foot forward in cover letters, CVs, and job interviews. The highly popular Breaking Barriers Learn @ Lunch series was also launched, providing inspiration, leadership, and a path forward for diverse jobseekers.

The team also continued to provide support for improved mental health, with specialized workshops delivered to each of YES' client groups.

Together, these programs are designed to meet today's English-speaking jobseekers where they're at, with what they need to succeed. Roughly 80% of employment clients who came to YES in 2023-24 found a job or returned to school for further training. Today's job market is not easy, with those from underrepresented groups and youth experiencing further barriers to employment. YES remains dedicated to ensuring that everyone has access to economic stability through employment.

## EMPLOYMENT IMPACT



938 CLIENTS



749 NEW CLIENTS

+27% YOY



1,297 COACHING SESSIONS



7,460 SERVICES DELIVERED



599 WORKSHOPS



3,676 WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE



79% SUCCEEDED IN GETTING A JOB OR RETURNING TO SCHOOL



### CLIENT FEATURE

## SARAH AZIZ

Sarah Aziz, a newcomer to Montreal from Toronto and a devoted young mother to her 4-year-old son, embarked on a challenging journey to secure employment. Despite facing hurdles such as lacking qualifications and navigating a new city, Sarah's determination remained unwavering. Her aspirations to work in the healthcare field fueled her job search, alongside her goal of finding stability while balancing her personal and professional life.

#### YES: What was the problem you were experiencing before you came into YES?

Sarah: Before joining YES' Youth on the Rise (YOTR) program, I grappled with a lack of confidence in my ability to secure stable employment, particularly due to my limited knowledge of French. This challenge left me feeling discouraged and unsure about my prospects for finding meaningful work. I was on the verge of giving up hope when I was fortunate enough to connect with Erjona, who introduced me to the YOTR program. Little did I know, this opportunity would be a turning point in my life, opening doors to possibilities I had previously thought were out of reach.

#### YES: What did you find as a result of using YES/YOTR services? What was the best thing about it?

Sarah: Utilizing YES/YOTR services was a game-changer for me. From honing my CV and interview skills to facilitating direct connections with potential employers, the program provided invaluable support throughout my job search journey. The trainers' unwavering dedication and motivation created a supportive environment where I felt empowered to pursue my goals with confidence.

The program's comprehensive approach not only equipped me with practical tools for success but also instilled in me a newfound sense of resilience and determination. The personalized guidance and encouragement I received helped me navigate challenges and ultimately secure employment. Overall, YOTR's commitment to my success made it an invaluable resource in my journey towards professional growth and development.

#### YES: How do you feel about the service you have received from YES/YOTR?

Sarah: I am incredibly grateful for the exceptional services provided by YES/YOTR. Their comprehensive approach, encompassing everything from language sessions to resilience workshops, truly made a difference in my life. The program not only expanded my knowledge but also shifted my mindset, instilling within me a newfound confidence and determination. The support and resources offered by YOTR have been invaluable on my journey to personal and professional success.

#### YES: What stage are you at now? What have been your greatest achievements?

Sarah: Currently, I am employed as a receptionist at Optimal Stretch Clinic, and I couldn't be happier with my role. The environment at the clinic, from my interactions with clients to my relationships with coworkers, has been incredibly welcoming and positive. Since starting here, I've experienced significant personal and professional growth.

*"Youth on the Rise gave me the confidence and skills I needed to enter the workforce in this new city where I had no connections. [...] I improved my French, my financial literacy, networking skills, and learned so many things about the job application process that I previously did not know."*

- Youth on the Rise participant



# ENTREPRENEURSHIP RECAP

YES' Entrepreneurship team serves a wide range of clients across Quebec. 2023-24 saw the program expand its reach through key partnerships, including a new relationship with the Nunavik Investment Corporation, which brought YES' team to Quebec's northern region for the first time!

Our organization also partnered with York University to continue to deliver specialized services to women entrepreneurs in Quebec. The national program run through York involves options for digital and in-person services meant to boost the resiliency and success of Canada's women entrepreneurs. Through this partnership, YES has continued to offer vital services to women entrepreneurs in Quebec under the ELLEvate banner, including tailored workshops and business coaching, as well as popular networking events and an annual pre-accelerator program.

The team also remained committed to building support networks and inspiring innovation through events like the Entrepreneurship Speaker Series. Two panel speaking and networking events were held this year. The first, hosted by our partners at Desjardins, featured a vibrant and animated panel of leaders from Design Shopp, Midday Squares, and 1 Milk2Sugars. With Andy Nulman at the helm as moderator, the sold-out event focused on marketing strategies for brand recognition. Our second Speaker Series, hosted by Google, featured a panel of women in tech who shared the opportunities and challenges available through AI insights. The panel was thought-provoking, educational, and entertaining. Thank you to our partners for helping to make both events a success!

YES continues to harness the power of community partners and volunteers to guide Quebec's entrepreneurs to new levels of success. From inspiration to motivation, business planning to skills development, our team's efforts supported more than 2,300 entrepreneurs and helped launch or grow almost 600 businesses this year!

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP IMPACT



25,932 KILOMETERS TRAVELLED



6,737 COACHING SESSIONS



134 ACCOUNTING AND LEGAL CLINICS

## CLIENT FEATURE

# NICK MEIRELES



Nick Meireles started his business, Kleaniko in August 2021 to provide five-star hotel-quality residential and commercial cleaning services. Now, he's working to promote "cleaning subscription plans", becoming the first in Montreal to offer such a business model in this sector. Nick is an example of a forward-looking hustler, who in two years has built a business to last!

**YES: When did you start your entrepreneurial journey and what were some of your goals when you started?**

Nick Meireles: My journey started when I met my coach Farshad Rouhani. I had just decided to open my business because I was fired from the hospitality industry due to the pandemic and its implications. My main goal was to create something extraordinary and of high value - to my employees and to my clients. I strongly believe that a company should be built to grow and last in the most ethical way possible, therefore I chose to offer my employees a safe place for expression, creativity and development. This allowed me to lead a team other than being a boss guided by mere profitable gain.

**YES: What was the problem you were experiencing before you came into YES?**

Nick Meireles: Before coming to YES I faced the worst challenge of my adult professional life: "not knowing my true entrepreneurial self". I was neither fully aware of my potential nor completely understood my abilities. My coach always pointed out qualities that for many years I believed to be flaws. I was always trying to bring different solutions, never satisfied, and constantly looking for ways to improve myself and my surroundings. YES opened my eyes to who I really was as a professional so I decided to embrace it.

**YES: What did you find as a result of using our services? What was the best thing about it?**

Nick Meireles: YES made me feel safe when making either important or small decisions. Made me analyze from the beginning if my business would be profitable or not. The result is an empowering mindset that anyone venturing into opening a company should have and benefit greatly from it.

**YES: What stage are you at now? What have been your greatest achievements?**

Nick Meireles: Now that I know my business model has been proven profitable, I find myself in the growth and establishment stage. My greatest achievement is the relationship I have with my team and my clients. They are the force of my business, the soul of everything I do.

**YES: Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?**

Nick Meireles: Be sure to become a part of YES so you can establish something solid from the beginning. It is an amazing tool for development. Since my first contact, I had only great experiences. From webinars to face-to-face coaching, career development, and more. Since I was referred to them by a friend, I am always referring people to them and they are all satisfied.

**"YES...provided invaluable resources like business planning tools and marketing strategies that were instrumental in turning LOVJOY Pilates from a dream into a reality. The best thing? The supportive community...I felt understood and supported"**

— Alexandra Papavramidi-Julien, YES Entrepreneurship client



## ARTS RECAP

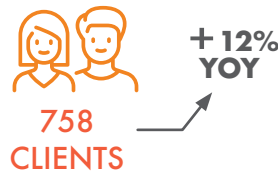
With the support of two dedicated Artist Business Coaches, the Arts team continued to address artist clients' needs and build on previous years' successes to deliver new and updated services.

An ongoing concern reported by artists is the isolation that can come from a career in the arts. With this in mind, our team worked to create more networking opportunities for our community. These included meet and great opportunities for our participating What the Pop! artists and members of the arts ecosystem in Montreal, as well as external workshops and events, including the "How to Curate Your Own Exhibition" workshop hosted by Cassandre Brillant at Espace Louable, and a tour of gallery openings at Belgo.

The ever popular What the Pop! art exhibitions were held in 4 locations last year – downtown Montreal, Hudson, Westmount, and Verdun. A jury of 5 arts professionals selected the 48 artists exhibiting their work, and participants were given access to several workshops that helped build on the skills they'd need for the event – storytelling, sales and display skills, and networking. The pop-ups were hugely successful, with 98% of participating artists rating their overall experience as excellent/very good, and more than 3,300 community members turning up to view the works and support the artists. The Business Skills for Creative Souls Artists' Conference was held this year at the Unitarian Church, with roughly one hundred artists and creatives taking part. Prior to the conference, consultations were available with several granting organizations, including CAC, CALQ, and CAM.

The team continues to focus on delivering programming and workshops that provide the essential business skills artists need to successfully build a career in the arts, while also building a supportive community of creatives within the province that can continue to encourage and work with each other. Together we are helping to grow the thriving cultural industry in this province—a sector that accounts for roughly 2% of Quebec's employment and contributes \$13B in GDP!

### ARTS IMPACT



#### CLIENT FEATURE

## KATE LAVUT

Kate Lavut is the playwright of *A Little Bit Pregnant*. It has been performed in Montreal and Toronto, and will soon be produced off-Broadway in New York City. She is also the author and illustrator of the graphic novel 'Chico' which was shortlisted for the Quebec Writers Federation Prize for Children's and Young Adult Literature. In her spare time, Kate teaches creative writing and crochets custom-made dolls.

**YES: When did you start your artistic journey and what were some of your goals when you started?**

Kate: I grew up in a house filled with art. My father was a filmmaker, and my mother was a writer. I was not going to grow up to be an accountant. I had my first break when my graphic novel 'Chico' was published. 'Chico' is the true tale of the time I dressed as a boy, jumped on a bus, and went to Mexico. It was shortlisted for the Quebec Writer's Federation Award and featured at the Toronto Comic Arts Festival. My goals weren't outrageous, I just wanted people to read my work and hear my story. Just as things were heating up for me, everything came to a crashing halt when I was suddenly diagnosed with aggressive stage three breast cancer. I had to put my career on hold and just concentrate on surviving.

**YES: What stage are you at now? What have been your greatest achievements?**

Kate: After I finished my treatments and had a chance for some hair to grow back, I decided to return to University... and was accepted into the creative writing department at Concordia University. Thus began my love affair with playwriting. My greatest achievement has been having the play I wrote 'A Little Bit Pregnant' performed in Montreal, Toronto, and off-Broadway in New York City.

**YES: What was the problem you were experiencing before you came into YES?**

Kate: Before coming to YES, I had challenges keeping organized and planning. I had a million ideas, but I needed help executing them. The workshops I took, and the Artist Business Coach I work with helped me put my plans into action and my actions into achievements.

**YES: What did you find as a result of using our services? What was the best thing about it?**

Kate: I know this sounds extreme, but YES has changed my life. I have become more organized and more confident in my decisions. There are amazing workshops that are offered regularly that I really appreciate, but the best thing for me is my Artist Business Coach. I can't believe how generous she is with her time and knowledge. She consistently goes above and beyond to help me achieve my goals. Knowing that she has my back gives me the courage to dream bigger and not be afraid to put myself out there and take chances on myself.

**YES: How do you feel about the service you have received from YES?**

Kate: The service I have received from YES has always been wonderful. From the friendly face of the receptionist in the lobby to the amazing workshops at affordable rates, to my Artist Business Coach who is helping me get a grant to start on my next graphic novel about my experience having breast cancer.

**"This was a great experience and really helped me make the first steps towards selling my own art and getting new creative ideas in anticipation of the event...I am honoured to have been part of this cohort."**

—What the Pop! participant



## IRIS UNGER AWARD WINNER DANIEL O'CONNOR AND BRADLEY HEAVEN

13 years ago, Daniel O'Connor met Bradley Heaven when he became his full-time aide, supporting him as he attended high school. Together, the two have gone on to not only complete high school and university degrees, but they've also built a friendship and business partnership that has helped fuel the success of their company, All Access Life.

Bradley was born with nonverbal Dyskinetic Cerebral Palsy, which affects his muscle tone regulation, coordination, and movement control. After seeing the life-changing effects that adaptive products have had on Brad's life, the two realized that they could help others connect with the best tools on the market through an informative (but more importantly, fun!) platform that outlines the current trends and movements in adaptive products and assistive technologies. As Brad outlines "Assistive technology has given me a voice, given me the ability to complete a college degree, stay connected with my friends and family, run a business with Dan, and even attend Zoom Meetings".

Brad and Dan first came to YES Employment + Entrepreneurship early in their entrepreneurial journey, when they had built a website but needed help figuring out the next steps in building their business. "YES gave us confidence. They gave us the vision to see that it was possible to turn this into a business," details Daniel.

The two have expanded beyond their website to build a huge social media following and, more recently, to give presentations to youth. Watch any of the pair's videos highlighting the newest tech, and you'll see the key to their success—their easygoing friendship, humour, and the accessibility of their content.

As All Access Life embarked on their next growth phase (hiring a team!), they once again turned to YES for support. While perusing the many support services offered at YES, the call for applications for the Iris Unger Recognition Award caught their eyes. With a \$1,000 cash prize, the award recognizes artists and entrepreneurs whose project best reflects the values that Iris Unger, YES' former Executive Director, instilled during her 18 years at YES: dedication and passion, success through hard work, and a true commitment to making a difference in the community.

All Access Life excels in all of these areas. All Access Life helps not only connect viewers to the latest in adaptive products and technologies, it also helps break down barriers and shine a light on the possibilities those technologies can bring—and that's something worth supporting.

## VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS



YES is able to offer an innovative and varied array of services to support English-speaking artists, entrepreneurs and jobseekers thanks to our talented network of volunteers and partners. From industry leaders who share their expertise through workshops and clinics, to dedicated board and committee members who advocate and work on special projects, community partners who share resources, and like-minded organizations who help advocate on behalf of our community, YES benefits from an extensive and generous community of support.

Ronika Khanna, owner of Montréal Financial, has supported the ELLEvate Women Entrepreneurs Pre-Accelerator program every year since its inception, providing accounting advice and support to the cohort participants. Assisting and helping foster a community of women entrepreneurs in Quebec is something close to Ronika's heart, as a woman entrepreneur herself: "I can relate back to my own experience and challenges as a woman in business. Being able to contribute to their financial knowledge and growth is very gratifying. The most impactful moments are when we workshop a problem and I

see the light of understanding flicker in their eyes and the sense of overwhelm fall away. This is profoundly rewarding."

The shared expertise of YES' many volunteers help our community hit the ground running in their career journeys – allowing them to build off the learnings of those who came before them.

YES is also able to continue to offer vital community services thanks to our funders and donors. Our volunteer-led Fundraising Event Planning Committee and new Corporate Engagement Committee drove further financial support to YES' work, while the new Government Relations committee advocated for further financial investments in our community from government.

Together we're building a community and economy that is inclusive, diverse, and innovative – and that's something worth celebrating! From the more than 3,200 people we supported with your help, thank you to everyone who supported YES in delivering our mission this year.



**Meeting with Minister of Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Randy Boissonault.**  
**Back Row:** Chad Walcott (PERT), Nicholas Salter (PERT), John Buck (CEDEC), Larry Markowitz, (YES), Michel Theroux (CEDEC).  
**Front Row:** Rachel Hunting (RDN), Cathy Brown (RDN), Sylvia Martin-Laforge (QCGN), Katherine Korakakis (QCGN), Randy Boissonault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages), Anthony Housefather (MP, Mont-Royal), Francis Scarpaleggia (MP, Lac-St-Louis), Aki Tchitacov (YES), Mario Clarke (YES)



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# THANK YOU TO OUR 2023–2024 FUNDERS AND PARTNERS



The Holt Foundation | The John Dobson Foundation | The Peacock Family Foundation

The Rossy Family Foundation | The Tauben Family Foundation

## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOUNDATION

# STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

Revenues	2024	2023
Grants	2,394,480	2,306,128
Donations and Fundraising	197,339	183,408
Services	87,733	85,056
Interest	15,855	1,508
	<b>2,695,407</b>	<b>2,576,100</b>
Expenditures	2024	2023
Salaries and Benefits	1,900,756	1,962,732
Rent	171,127	170,308
Office Administration	133,911	129,124
Publicity and Promotion	83,479	88,386
Women Based Project	55,177	68,762
Community Sector Recovery Fund Project	48,355	0
Workshops, Events and Services	44,083	34,155
Sales Tax - Non reimbursed	43,256	27,403
Amortization	36,861	28,026
Regional Project	31,422	28,088
Strengthening Montreal Project	22,152	0
Fundraising	17,840	18,544
Interest and Bank Charges	7,705	5,602
Write Down on Capital Assets	5,575	0
Conferences	4,942	5,921
Employment Roundtable Project	0	7,500
	<b>2,606,641</b>	<b>2,574,551</b>
<b>Excess of Revenue over Expenses</b>	<b>88,766</b>	<b>1,549</b>

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



**ELLEVATE** A program by **Yes** Employment Entrepreneurship

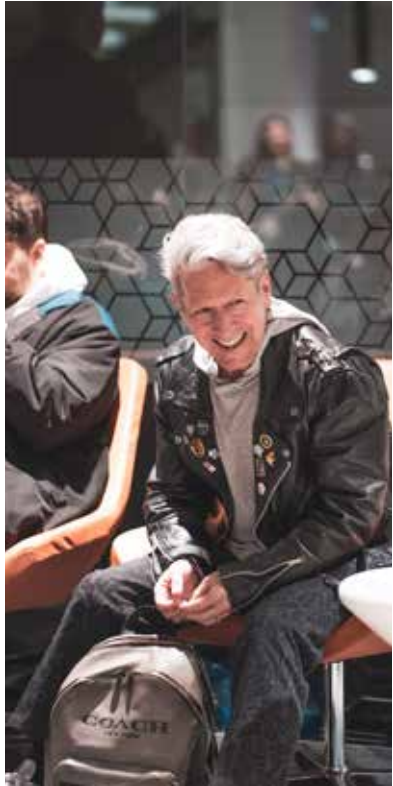
## Looking to launch, grow & scale your own business?

- Workshops
- Business Coaching
- eLearning Courses
- Networking Events
- Mentorship
- Pre-Accelerator



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# SEE HOW FAR WE'VE ALL COME!

OVER THE PAST YEAR, YOU'VE HELPED STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT AND CONNECTION AND WE WANT TO THANK YOU.

While nobody can predict the future, you can rest assured that YES will be beside you. We will be here serving thousands more clients in the coming year and in the years ahead. We are so grateful to you for accompanying us on our mission to enrich this diverse and innovative community, empowering Quebecers with tools for bright futures.





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