

**Announcer:**

Ladies and gentlemen, it's time once again to celebrate the efforts of those who go above and beyond in the non-profit sector. Welcome to the third annual CharityVillage Awards gala.

**Music: splashy awards-show fanfare**

Yes. Tonight, we're honoring those individuals who made outstanding contributions to their organizations and to the sector as a whole. And now without further ado, here's your host for tonight's ceremonies, Mary Barroll.

**SFX and music: applause and "walk on" cover music****Mary Barroll:**

Well thank you and welcome to a special edition of CharityVillage Connects, a podcast that explores topics vital to the nonprofit sector in Canada. While 2023 saw a return to many normal aspects of life, it also witnessed unprecedented demand for the services provided by our sector. At the same time, inflation drove up costs while funding generally leveled off, forcing some organizations to figure out how to do more with less. Through ingenuity, innovation, and sheer determination. And as the year comes to a close, we're celebrating these efforts along with the commitment, passion, and drive that will keep the nonprofit sector in Canada moving forward into the new year and beyond.

**Isabel Deslauriers:**

There was so much excitement on our team when we found out that we won the award, you should have seen the GIFs and the emojis that were flying around. We're a very virtual team and we can't wait to share the news with our volunteers and to have them join into the celebration.

**Tammy Webster:**

Being recognized by the peers and the experts that reviewed all the applications, it's an honour and a little humbling because so many people were looking at it and said, yeah, Let's Talk Science is doing some really cool stuff. It's a testament to our vision, our mission, our beliefs, all of these values that kind of drive our operations in what we do.

**Kat Magnuson:**

And we got the email and we're just like, wait, what <laugh> we won? It was so exciting. We got to share it with the team. We're really excited to be able to share with our community and on social media and through our newsletters and let people know.

**Misha Goforth:**

This is the second time that we won. And it was really surprising. We were really excited to have this. The award means a lot to us because this is the work we do every day around diversity, equity, and inclusion. And so this is a chance for us to showcase what is it that we're doing inside and making sure that we're walking the walk and doing everything that we're advising as well.

**Irene Kessie:**

Getting recognized by an organization like CharityVillage means so much to us because CharityVillage is the epitome of what we're trying to do. And so I think with this recognition, it could open more doors for us.

**Lorenda Calvert:**

This really recognizes the work that we've been doing, the path that we've been on is a good path to be on and we're really excited to share this with our membership and our sector and we really hope to use this as an opportunity to highlight those programs and inspire organizations to adopt similar programs or really just to model this behaviour.

**Cecilia Leung:**

This is really a pleasant surprise for me. I do not know that the organization submitted my name for the award, so I hope that I can inspire other people to start volunteering too.

**Ambreen Ahmad:**

When I saw the nomination on CharityVillage, I said, we have to do this because of the unique and innovative characteristics of the project.

**Jared Ross:**

It really means a lot. We're always a little bit behind the scenes, but we always want to kind of raise that flag for literacy. And so to get that kind of presence and that recognition is amazing.

**Lais Gomez:**

I think being nominated by them show that I'm doing something that it's also relevant to the volunteers that I supervise. So I was very happy that they recognized that and also nominated me.

**Taya Rtichsheva:**

The CharityVillage Award is the incredible opportunity for people like us at U Multicultural, just to be recognized, just to be heard, and also to build connections and network with other groups across Canada.

**Shannon Caskey:**

It was just so amazing to be recognized in this degree because we do kind of pull the strings on the backside of things, but we're not often on the red carpet with it. So it's surely inspirational.

**Mary Barroll:**

You just heard the reactions of some of our award winners when they received the good news about their peers recognizing them as being among the very best in the nonprofit sector. And don't worry, they'll be letting us in on the secrets of their success throughout this episode. Trust me, their stories are truly amazing and will no doubt provide plenty of ideas and inspiration for organizations of any size or mission. But first, I'd like to tell you about the National CharityVillage Awards and the outstanding achievements they recognize. Our aim with these awards is to highlight excellence in areas that are

crucial to the future success and resilience of every nonprofit organization and to the sector itself. In this episode, we'll be recognizing stellar work in the fields of fundraising, volunteer management, workplace mental health, diversity, equity and inclusion, technological innovation, outstanding impact by individuals and much more. And to more fully honour a sector where making a difference can occur in many different ways. We've split our awards in each category for nonprofits with over 20 staff members and for those with under 20 staff members, these awards have already sent a buzz through the nonprofit community. So if you're curious about what made the winners stand out for the judges, you are about to find out more about their successes and how their organizations achieve them. It's time to get comfortable and enjoy the show. The awards are about to begin!

**Announcer:**

Up first on the CharityVillage Awards, best individual fundraising professional!

**Mary Barroll:**

Fundraising lies at the very heart of the nonprofit world, and hardworking individual fundraisers are dedicated to connecting donors to important causes by finding new and innovative ways to raise money. So our first award winner in the category of best individual fundraising professional is Shannon Caskey from the Darling Home for Kids. Shannon, tell us a bit about your organization and the work you do there.

**Shannon Caskey:**

We're the only organization of our kind in Ontario. We work specifically with a very special pediatric population of children who are classified as medically complex. And what medically complex means is that our children rely on technology for daily living as well as an intensive nurse of care. Most of our children are in wheelchairs and members of the deaf blind community, and they require really intensive medical support. So we provide a haven on 77 acres on the Niagara Escarpments in Milton. These children can come and enjoy activities that are unavailable to them elsewhere in the community. We have a therapeutic adapted playground. We offer music therapy, recreation therapy, and programs such as that. Our facility is about 25,000 square feet and the programs that they can participate in are respite programming where parents and caregivers can take a much-needed break from the demands of 24 caregiving for these special children, and children can come and stay with us for a few days or a week at a time.

We also offer a residential program. So for children who have medical needs that are so significant that they can't stay in a home environment but not quite acute enough to be in a hospital. They can come and stay with us and they'll stay with us for all the years of their lives while their parents and caregivers are still very much a part of their care plans. We also offer a hospice palliative program for children that are at the end of life. And what that means for our organization with all three of these programs is that we are often with these families when these children are first diagnosed all the way until their final days. So we play a very special role in these children's lives.

**Mary Barroll:**

It sounds like incredible work that your organization is doing that is so critical and so I'm sure appreciated by the families and the children. What do you think made your nomination stand out?

### **Shannon Caskey:**

If I had to guess, knowing my CEO, I am sure she put a lot of effort into it, as she does with all things. I think that I've really been able to move the needle when it comes to the work that we're doing at the Darling Home for Kids. So when I started, you know, there were some things that we already did quite successfully. The charity started in 1995 and officially opened their doors in 2004. They'd gone through two smaller capital expansions and one of the pieces I felt was really missing from the program, the overall development program was a major gift program. There wasn't really a strategy or the right tactics around that to really develop that and engage donors who had the capacity to really move the needle and make some cornerstone investments into the home. So within the first year that I actually started there, they would develop a lot of those fundraising relationships and donor relationships to such success actually that we had donors come forward who wanted to do something very large scale for our organization.

We were bursting out the seams. We are, we've had wait lists for programs. We do have a desire to grow. And so we launched our most ambitious capital campaign in the history of the Home with a couple of these incredible donors really at the forefront of it and a very supportive board of directors. We launched the Capital campaign right at the start of the pandemic. It was March of 2020, so we were nervous, we were nervous, <laugh> doing a public launch at that time, but we had such strong support from our donors and volunteers that we were able to raise about 7.25 million, exceeded our goal. That was just within the first two years of my time with the organization. I, I think that sort of getting out of the gate and doing things that were really impactful, I think was able to really advance the care and, and the level of service that we can provide.

As I said, what were so, so many amazing people and I think really bringing them together in the spirit of our cause and wanting to make a difference and knowing that there's more we can do has certainly been very beneficial to our success and my success as a fundraiser. Since that time, we've developed a really robust annual giving program. You know, we have a great signature event portfolio as well as working with lots of community partners and third party events and all of that coming into play. We've dramatically increased our revenue over the past five years, which is just truly amazing,

### **Mary Barroll:**

Extraordinary accomplishment, especially in these really tough times. It's inspiring to hear your story. I'd love to know what being named a finalist and ultimately a winner for this award meant to you and ultimately your organization.

### **Shannon Caskey:**

The end of the day, you know, you're not gonna see your name in Bright Lights as a fundraiser. You're a person sort of behind the scenes. You've got these incredible amazing donors making an impact. You have these incredible people on the program delivery and service delivery side and you know, your amazing beneficiaries who receive all this great care. So I think as a fundraiser, it was just so amazing to be recognized in this degree because we do kind of pull the strings on the backside of things, but we're not often on the red carpet with it. So it's truly inspirational. I think one of the most rewarding parts of this process was that my team and my CEO really felt that I deserved this award and to be nominated and took the time to do something like that. And I'm so grateful for CharityVillage for that recognition. I

think there's just so many incredible people working in the sector, all across Canada, all across the world, and it's so nice to be able to really bring them forward into the light and congratulate them on that important work.

**Announcer:**

Next up on the CharityVillage Awards, Best Nonprofit Employer for Workplace Mental Health.

**Mary Barroll:**

As the nonprofit sector faces an epidemic of burnout, forward-thinking, organizations are implementing strategies to create mentally healthy workplaces where staff and volunteers can thrive. This award celebrates those organizations that through the use of creative and flexible initiatives are supporting work-life balance, and the health of their teams in the category of best nonprofit employer for workplace mental health, the winner for an organization with Under 20 staff members is the BC Museums Association. Accepting the award is Lorenda Calvert program manager for this organization that represents more than 450 member organizations from across British Columbia. Lorenda, for such a small operation, your nonprofit works at a very impressive scale. Can you tell us more about what you do?

**Lorenda Calvert:**

So the BC Museums Association is a nonprofit organization that supports museums throughout the province of BC. That's what our name is, represents what we do. There are over 600 museums in BC and the BCMA uses the broadest terms of museums. So that's a sort of catchall umbrella name that includes science centers, aquariums, parks, galleries. If you think it might be a museum, we probably count it as a museum. We have over 450 members that we support directly, and each province actually has their own Provincial Museums Association. And then we have the Canadian Museums Association, and then there's the International associations as well. And that support looks like advocacy work. It looks like grant administration, it looks like learning opportunities, webinars, workshops, resources, and annual conferences. And that's where I come in as the Programs Manager with the BCMA. I look after those webinars, workshops, resources, and online courses. It's a job that I'm really passionate about and I'm very happy to be at the BCMA.

**Mary Barroll:**

Well, what do you think made your nomination really stand out? I mean, I'm sure there were other very worthy organizations, but you must have been doing something special.

**Lorenda Calvert:**

What I think makes us stand out is that we are a person first organization. A lot of the decisions that we make, the policies we put in place and the work that we do really centers the people of our workplace. We're a very small team of eight staff members, but all of the initiatives that we've implemented, which includes a bi-annual roles and responsibility meeting, where we visually display what everyone's workloads look like so that we can ensure that there's no one overburdened, which helps with burnout. We have a flexible work policy which accommodates staff members with chronic illness or folks who have caregiving roles. We have a flexible stat holiday policy. So if you don't want to take a traditional

colonial stat holiday but would like to embrace a different one, that's absolutely celebrated at BCMA, we have a very transparent HR policy that has been developed, which includes salary transparency.

We have a bi-annual justice equity, diversion, and inclusion training for the staff. We just completed a bystander intervention training. In addition to that, we have quarterly justice, equity, diversion, and inclusion reports that we share with our membership and sector speaking to the work that we're undertaking at our organization. We are a certified living wage employer that was adopted by our board. And then beyond all of that, we also have these resources that we've created that we share with our sector. Again, where my role comes in, where we created a mental health toolkit. We've had webinars on becoming a living wage employer. We had webinars on what unionization might look like. We have resources that center an employer's role in burnout and addressing equity in the workplace. Often you see resources that come from the individual that advocate for steps that you need to take, like getting more rest. But we really want to center that it could be more focused on the employer. These are all the things that I think make our workplace really special. And I'm sure that the adjudicator saw that and also recognized that. But I don't want to speak to what the adjudicators saw in our application or didn't see. And again, we were with some wonderful finalists that I'm sure have fantastic programs for their workplace as well.

**Mary Barroll:**

Well, don't be too modest. Clearly you impressed everyone in terms of the programs that you offer, what does being named a winner for this award mean to you and your organization?

**Lorenda Calvert:**

It's really wonderful to be awarded a winner for this. As a team, we were celebrating that this really recognizes the work that we've been doing. The path that we've been on is a good path to be on and we're really excited to share this with our membership and our sector. And we really hope to use this as an opportunity to highlight those programs and inspire organizations to adopt similar programs or really just to model this behaviour and encourage them to explore these potential options for their workplace. So it was really wonderful to be a winner and we really hope to take this acknowledgement and inspire change.

**Mary Barroll:**

Younger generations are passionate about making a difference, but how can organizations help youth join the sector and advance in the workplace? Our winner for best nonprofit employer for youth advancement with less than 20 staff members has spent more than a decade nurturing and training young people in the importance of food, growing it, cooking it, and even marketing it. Kat Vriesema-Magnuson is Director of Experiential Learning Programs at Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society in British Columbia.

**Kat Magnuson:**

Fresh Roots is a nonprofit charity based out of Vancouver, BC. We do a lot of work growing educational farms on school grounds, and we use our spaces to help youth gain the skills necessary to become change makers in our food systems. We really believe that just food systems are important for

everybody and by giving young people chances to participate in and learn about those food systems, we can make a better world for everyone.

**Mary Barroll:**

That's so nice. And what made you decide to submit a nomination for the awards?

**Kat Magnuson:**

We've really been focusing in the last several years, especially in how we can help our young participants really grow into those change makers. The work that we do is based around growing and sharing food, but the bigger picture is how do we grow the people who are growing and sharing that food? And so we're excited to see this opportunity and really see how our work with kids from 11 all the way up through post-secondary is helping make that happen.

**Mary Barroll:**

Well, you certainly made the judges take notice. What do you think made your nomination stand out?

**Kat Magnuson:**

You know, I think the breadth of what we're doing, considering we're quite a small organization, we have eight full-time staff who work year round. And then we work through our leadership pathways program with around 75 youth over the course of the year. Again, ranging in age from 11 year olds who are graduating from our summer day camp program into being volunteers and helpers for our camps up through our secondary youth who participate in a six week summer program to really gain their skills and leadership development as well as growing food and learning how to cook and sell at markets through our seasonal staff who we really dedicate a lot of time and energy to training and building their potential both within our organization and then going out into the wider world. So we're really working across a wide spectrum to help youth grow and become the people that they want to be.

**Mary Barroll:**

And what does being named a winner for this award mean both to you and your organization itself?

**Kat Magnuson:**

You know we spend so much time doing the work and we are just really deep in working with youth, working on our farms, growing things, but we don't often take as much time as we should to sit back and reflect on what we've done and our successes. Just going through the process of applying for this award really helped us focus and understand what we were already doing in a more clear way. So just being able to take that and come back to our staff and our participants in our community and say, look at this work that we're doing that might not get seen because it's not the thing that shows up necessarily on the front page of our annual report is pictures of kids and vegetables, but this work of youth development and youth advancement kind of sits a little under the surface of the work that we do on a daily basis. So being able to showcase that because it is such an important part of what we've been doing for these last few years.



**Mary Barroll:**

Well, I'd love to hear how you felt. How did you feel and how did you celebrate?

**Kat Magnuson:**

Yeah, honestly, we were not expecting it at all. This is actually our first time applying for the CharityVillage Award and it was a team of us who worked together to put together the application and we got the email and we're just like, wait, what? We won <laugh>. That's, it was just like, it was so exciting. We got to share it with the team. We're really excited to be able to share with our community and on social media and through our newsletters and let people know.

**Mary Barroll:**

While youth advancement in the workplace should be an organization-wide effort, it depends on the contributions of dedicated individuals to be truly effective. Irene Duah-Kessie is one of those people, she's young, interested in STEM, the well-known acronym for science, technology, engineering and medicine. And for the past three years has dedicated herself to attracting and engaging other young people into the field as Founder and Executive Director of RISE in STEM, here to accept the award for individual best contribution to youth advancement is this year's winner, Irene Duah-Kessie. Irene, can you tell us a little bit about your organization Rise in STEM?

**Irene Kessie:**

We are a youth-led grassroots initiative based in Toronto, specifically the Etobicoke area. And we provide different learning opportunities around leadership and specifically building technical skills and career development for young people to be successful in today's digital society. We particularly have a focus on black youth, but we try to serve underserved communities across the GTA and I applied for the CharityVillage Awards. I've been following CharityVillage for some time now and has been a go-to place for me in terms of job opportunities, specifically, and just events happening in the nonprofit sector. And when I saw the awards, I just felt like it was a timely manner for me to apply just because we are wrapping up our third year programming. We started this in the midst of the pandemic or just right before the pandemic started. And so this is our first year kind of going back in person to doing programming and I just feel like we've had like a really good fulsome experience in our first three years. And so when I saw the award I'm like, why not apply just to celebrate this big milestone for us.

**Mary Barroll:**

Well we're glad that you did and you certainly made the judges take notice. What do you think made your nomination stand out?

**Irene Kessie:**

I think what made it stand out is just with us being youth-led and grassroots and just being able to see that we've been able to create something from the ground up and now it's evolved into a movement or momentum in my community, but also STEM broadly. We've been able to work with different community partners, specifically STEM organizations and institutions and receive so much support from funders, specifically the Ontario Trillium Foundation to allow us to do what we do. And I think we're doing it in such a unique way because like I mentioned, it's youth-led. We're STEM focused and we are one of a kind in the Etobicoke community that we serve. And so I feel like that has allowed us to be



unique in taking a community approach to building for STEM career development, but also very practical because we're engaged with the community and we essentially are working with the community to develop these opportunities. And so I think that's what made it stand out. I'm hoping it has. And so yeah, I'm just really happy and appreciative to be recognized for this work.

**Mary Barroll:**

What does it mean to you personally that you've been named a winner for this award and then for your organization?

**Irene Kessie:**

Yeah, I think for me it just helps me see that I'm doing something right. It gives me much more motivation to keep pushing and believing in the vision. When I started this initiative, it was just really because of my experiences going through post-secondary, I didn't really realize that so much people had the similar experience as me and how much the community needed this. And so, I think for me just allows me to feel validated in my experiences and what I foresee is needed in the community especially because with the journey starting something like this, there's so many highs and lows and it can get confusing sometimes. So for me, I think it's just really validating and allows me to kind of continue pushing even when I feel like I'm not sure what I'm doing. And I think for the organization, getting recognized by an organization like CharityVillage means so much to us because CharityVillage is the epitome of what we're trying to do. And so I think with this recognition it could open more doors for us that can lead to more support, more opportunities, but ultimately just strengthening our mission and providing that credibility to our mission, which can then inspire young people who have been engaged with us in the past and will come in the future.

**Mary Barroll:**

While the primary role of nonprofits is to provide services, guidance, and support for specific communities and causes, it's also important for them to walk the talk. In other words, embrace within their own organizations the same values and principles they project externally. This year we continue to shine a light on those organizations and people who've demonstrated their commitment to socially responsible hiring and onboarding practices and how they are actively incorporating policies that encourage diversity, equity, inclusion, community outreach and accessibility within their workplace. The winner in the category of organizations with less than 20 staff members is Pride at Work Canada. Accepting the award is the organization's Manager of Social Research and Development, Misha Goforth. Misha, I know your organization does important work. Tell us a bit about what you do.

**Misha Goforth:**

So Pride at Work Canada is a nonprofit that's member serving. We work with just under 300 employers from across the country to advance diversity, equity and inclusion and basically make workplaces that are inclusive of all employees regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity and gender expression. So this is really an area that we specialize in, in terms of the work we do every day and the content we put out there. And so that leads exactly into why we wanted to submit for the third year in a row to participate in the awards. And it's really about continuing to be a part of that conversation that we're advising on every day in our work with our proud partners and making sure that we're

demonstrating what we're doing internally at the same time because this is really something that we work on every day internally as well.

**Mary Barroll:**

Well I must say you certainly have impressed the judges. This is your second win in this category. What do you think makes your nomination standout year after year?

**Misha Goforth:**

Yeah, so you're right, this is the second time that we won and it was really surprising. We were really excited to have this. The award means a lot to us because this is the work we do every day around diversity, equity, and inclusion. And so this is a chance for us to showcase what is it that we're doing inside and making sure that we're walking the walk and doing everything that we're advising as well. I know that when we last were on your podcast for winning the award in 2021, I think we were talking about creating these action plans for ourselves internally that would really guide our work forward in a couple specific areas. So around anti-black racism around truth and reconciliation, accessibility and then anti-poverty. So for example, we were able to roll out a group retirement savings plan, which is something that, you know, anecdotally working in the nonprofit sector and having many friends who do, is not usually something that we have access to in the sector.

It's not a conversation that I think we hear a lot in nonprofit organizations. So getting to have that rolled out this past year has been a really big win. We were also certified as a living wage employer in Ontario, which was a really big deal for us. And we have staff who work in different provinces in the country, so we're certified in Ontario, but making sure that every staff member has access to that as well. And something exciting as well in the past year is we published a really large research report called Lead with Pride, where we spoke with queer, trans, two-spirit professionals from different sectors and different industries who have reached leadership positions to talk about, you know, what pathways have you taken to leadership, what were some of the barriers and supports along the way? And nonprofit was included as one of the industries that we spoke with.

And so that research helped us kind of identify the barriers that folks in our community do face in their careers and then turn the look back inwards again to say, how are we ensuring that these barriers aren't existing in our workplace and in the careers of folks who kind of come through the organization. So we have really intentional funding available for professional development. We have group professional development as well and professional development plans for each staff member. Which again, speaking as someone who's worked in the nonprofit sector, that's just not something that's always talked about in the workplace. And budgets are always limited and capacity for work is always limited. So that's something that I've really seen prioritized in the last year or so. So it's really exciting to kind of get to be a part of all that. There's a lot of things I think that feel impossible for small organizations to do because capacity is limited.

And in the nonprofit sector, again, we want to put all of our capacity towards the impact on the ground that we're trying to have, but we're an organization who's also staffed entirely by members of the 2SLGBTQIA plus community. So it's really, really important that we are able to kind of take the time and make sure that our staff are doing well, also <laugh> and that as members of the community, this is a,

an affirming workplace that we can have. So getting to showcase that and kind of lead by example is really great and we're really happy to have the award this year.

**Mary Barroll:**

Our next award recognizes outstanding or innovative achievements in the use of technology with advancements occurring every day, there are more opportunities than ever to harness technology for social good. Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy is a network of organizations and individuals supporting adult literacy in Toronto and York region. Accepting the award for best nonprofit technological innovation for an organization of under 20 staff members is Ambreen Ahmad, Managing Director and Jared Ross, Board President. Ambreen and Jared, take us through the role Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy plays in the community and how you help shape those efforts.

**Ambreen Ahmad:**

Well, MTML has been in the field since it's the 44th year. We support adult literacy across Toronto and York region. We have 33 different service providers in Toronto and York region. And we advocate adult literacy. We provide professional development and create resources. Smartphone project was one project that we got funded through skills development fund in 2022-23. And when I saw the nomination on CharityVillage, I said, we have to do this because of the unique and innovative characteristics of the project. There are many reasons for it. We've created specifically smartphone modules that include bite-sized videos, tip sheets that are based on trauma-informed lens, and then learning activities that have that e-learning component. So we thought it was something totally new. We hadn't seen such a thing in our research, specific modules for literacy learners, not only literacy learners but also employment services clients. It serves a lot of purposes for a diverse audience. Plus it's very culturally unique. Each of the project partners that were involved created their own modules, obviously through our project staff, but that made it very unique.

**Jared Ross:**

What I think about the smartphone project specifically is we just really tried to make it kind of ubiquitous. There was such a huge demand during the pandemic and afterwards to get people onto devices to get people using Zoom, using their devices. And what does everybody have now? What's affordable? It's a smartphone and it's the kind of thing where we wanted to pitch something that could be accessible really to anybody. And that would have kind of uses not just for employment, but for any kind of application you're doing for any kind of work you're doing on a smartphone. And it's just so versatile and it's the kind of thing where it kind of connects across age groups. It can work with learners who've just come to Canada, it can work with seniors, it can work with all kinds of different populations. It's just very funny. With our material, we were designing it, you know, I was sending it to my mom to just say, here, we've made this module, does this work? Sorry mom, you're not great with a smartphone. Here you go. Here's how you, you do something with Zoom or something like that. So it was really pitched towards a broad group and had a lot of buy-in from a lot of our really great literacy partners.

**Mary Barroll:**

So she was your product design tester, <laugh>, Jared, what does being named a winner for this award mean to you and your organization?

### **Jared Ross:**

It really means a lot. We're kind of in year 43, 44 of our history as a literacy organization where our mandate really is to connect learners with all of our fantastic partners, colleges, different literacy organizations that serve specific populations in the community. We're always a little bit behind the scenes, but we always want to kind of raise that flag for literacy, raise our voice that, you know, MTML is here, that we're doing advocacy, that we're doing projects with our partners. And so to get that kind of presence and that recognition is amazing. And the Smartphone Project is one of the biggest projects we've ever embarked on. And again, I wanted to shout to Ambreen and the team at MTML for doing such a fantastic job on it. And it just means so much to be nominated and be acknowledged for our success.

### **Mary Barroll:**

Our next award recognizes organizations with over 20 staff who are finding exceptional ways to recruit and engage their volunteers. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our sector and play an essential role in each organization's success. This past year brought increasing challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers. This award is dedicated to those that found ways to overcome the obstacles and maintain a strong volunteer program. And the winner is Let's Talk Science, here to accept the award we have Tammy Webster, Director of Equity, and Isabel Deslauriers, Director of Youth and Volunteer Experience for Let's Talk Science. Tell us about your roles and what your organization does.

### **Tammy Webster:**

It's incredible the work that Let's Talk Science does and has been doing. They've been around for 30 years, so we get to celebrate our 30th anniversary this year, which is exciting. We are all about STEM education and all of our resources are at no charge to children and youth from kind of kindergarten to grade 12. Also, we engage with the educator or professional learning communities and populations. Some of the, I guess, great accomplishments that we've had is we've had over 3 million interactions with youth and educators during our time. A lot of our programming is used in about 6,000 schools. We're in about 55 and I know Isabel will correct me on that one. Outreach sites across Canada who deliver STEM outreach into schools, into communities, into various organizations. And some of our, I guess metrics is we've had over 12,000 classrooms. We go into the classrooms working with students. So that's just kind of some of the highlights of what we are. All of our work is really driven around ensuring that every child across Canada has access to STEM and can see themselves in STEM.

### **Isabel Deslauriers:**

At the beginning of Let's Talk Science, it was all about the kids that we reach and getting them excited about science and involved in science and we're really proud of the impact that we have on them. However, with time we also started to realize what an impact the program was having on our volunteers. Our volunteers are mostly post-secondary STEM students and through their experience with Let's Talk Science, they develop an understanding of the importance of science, communication, science outreach, and the importance of science literacy in the world too. They developed the skills and a passion that they need to stay science ambassadors, whatever their career path takes them to. So after their experience now they graduate, they become research scientists, community activists, policy makers, industry leaders, teachers, and they're able to bring those skills and that passion with them. So I

often think about the tens of thousands of people really that are out there in the science community and it's a tremendous engine for change.

So once we realized that was happening as part of the program that really happened, started to just do fun science with kids, we started to really focus on it. So our team pays close attention to volunteers. We do a lot of listening, we survey them a lot, and often, we look at comparing the experience of volunteers across demographic groups to make sure the support that they get and the experience that they get is equitable. We try to understand why they sign up and then why they stay and also why they leave sometimes or why they can't engage. And we constantly make adjustments to the program based on that understanding. We also pay close attention to their skill development to make sure that they leave their volunteer experience with skills that are then going to help them in their life and their career and to help them continue to be advocates for science throughout their life.

**Mary Barroll:**

Volunteer Managers play a vital role in creating successful volunteer programs. Our next award recognizes individual success in this area. Get ready to celebrate the Best Volunteer Manager, and the winner is Lais Gomes, Volunteer Manager at Access Pro Bono. Tell us about your organization and the work you do there.

**Lais Gomes:**

I work for Access Pro Bono Society of BC it's a not-for-profit organization that provides free legal services for low-income individuals in the province. I coordinate the program called Summer Device Program. In that program I have nearly 40 volunteers that access the legal needs from low-income individuals in the province that are seeking legal advice for free. And those volunteers, they volunteer three hours per week assessing our live client call and we work very close together. And I saw the nomination on LinkedIn and I thought that could be a good opportunity for our program and also for our volunteers as well to expand our connections and also get more people to know about what we are doing and the impact that we do in the community.

**Mary Barroll:**

Well, I think it's terrific. What do you think made your nomination stand out?

**Lais Gomes:**

I would say that beyond the volunteer responsibilities that I share with everybody, we are very organized and I try to be very transparent with everyone. I think beyond that, I also try to connect with their why. Why they want to volunteer for our organization, what are their goals as well. And of course, they want to impact the community and gain experience while they are with us, but they also want to become the next generation of lawyers and I know their goals and I try to connect with them and also support them throughout their journey. So, I think that's one thing that made my application stand out because I care about them beyond their volunteer duties with us.

**Mary Barroll:**

How does being named a winner for this award, what does it mean to you and your organization? How does it make you feel?

**Lais Gomes:**

I think I'm doing something good <laugh>. I think people sometimes they take for granted supervising volunteers. I personally believe that supervising volunteers is more difficult than supervising paid employees because they are donating their time. They're doing that for free. So you have to make sure that beyond explaining what they're supposed to do and have a very clear and transparent communication with them, you also have to make sure that you care about their goals as well. You care about why they are doing that and what they want to achieve out of that experience. So I think, being nominated by them showed that I am doing something that is also relevant to the volunteers that I supervise, and also beyond that impact that toward the community that seeks our program, I am also helping them to achieve their goals which is to become the next generation of lawyers in BC. So I was very happy that they recognized that and also nominated me for the award.

**Announcer:** And now, it's time for the CharityVillage Most Outstanding Impact Awards! And here once again is your host, Mary Barroll!

**Mary Barroll:**

Our final two awards focus on nonprofit staff and volunteers who, each day, bring passion, dedication, and expertise to their work in organizations across Canada. Truly, they help to make our country a better and more vibrant place to live.

So, for the most Outstanding Impact Staff award, the winner is... Taya Rtichsheva, Executive Director at U Multicultural Channel!

Taya, congratulations. Let's start with your role, and the kind of work your organization does.

**Taya Rtichsheva:**

So U Multicultural has been founded in 2019 as a volunteer-based organization. We're all immigrants, newcomers, people with different diverse backgrounds and with the media background. So, we decided to form the organization which would serve different ethno-cultural communities in the media landscape. So currently we have U Multicultural Channel, and we also have a U radio under one U Multicultural Inc umbrella.

So, we also have a media portal, social media platforms, and we provide services to more than 30 of the cultural communities in Winnipeg, Manitoba and across Canada. So, in addition to that, we work with many Indigenous communities and groups. We produce content in Inuktitut, Ojibwe, and Cree languages, which is a big achievement for us. We also built a partnership with the many Indigenous organizations, not only in Winnipeg, but also across Canada.

We also provide media training for anybody who is interested in being a journalist, reporter, director, camera operator. We provide facility, equipment, access to airtime, which is absolutely incredible. And



CharityVillage actually plays a big role in our daily operations, as I mentioned, because we have an access to a huge community of charities and nonprofits.

**Mary Barroll:**

What made your organization decide to submit a nomination for this award?

**Taya Rtichsheva:**

So, for us, CharityVillage is absolutely outstanding portal. I personally subscribed to this portal for multiple years. And this particular portal helps us to manage our non-for-profit organization, nonprofit media, community media platform, with trainings, workshops, newsletters, useful information, which helps us to manage the organization, made a decision, get some qualified advices, connect with other nonprofits and charities across Canada. So, and the CharityVillage Award is the incredible opportunity for people like us at U Multicultural just to be recognized, just to be heard, and also to build connections and network with other groups across Canada.

U Multicultural and what we're doing in community media sector is very unique. So, there is no model in the current Canadian media landscape like U Multicultural. We are very unique and exclusive because we are non-for-profit community based and we have Indigenous, non-Indigenous, black, racialized diverse people under one umbrella.

**Mary Barroll:**

What does being named a winner for this award mean to you and your organization? How did it make you feel?

**Taya Rtichsheva:**

First of all, just wanted to mention that this morning I received lots of emails from my colleagues from other professional associations, from national community and campus radio association, and the executive director said that Taya congratulations you've been selected as a winner I'm like oh wow that's really exciting thank you so much and he mentioned that it is a big win. It is a big win.

To be a winner of such a prestigious and national level award as a CharityVillage award is the big achievement and recognition, not just by nonprofit and charitable communities and sector, but also by the community in the whole. So that's why I think it is great to be selected and I feel really thankful for this opportunity.

**Mary Barroll:**

As we've already mentioned, volunteers play a vital role in the efforts of most nonprofits, and are key to their success. Often, they are unsung heroes. With our final award we pay tribute Cecilia Ching Yee Leung who works with the Chinese Community Policing Centre in BC, an organization that provides crime prevention programs and services to Chinese victims of crime, in a particularly difficult part of Vancouver

**Cecilia Ching Yee Leung:**

Yes, the Chinese Community Policing Centre, which is the short form is the CPCC is located very near to the downtown east side neighborhood which is a very challenging neighborhood with complex social issues. So for me, I believe that for the volunteers to want to come to volunteer in this neighborhood takes a lot of courage. And so, I think my organization nominated me is because I am willing to be part of the team working in this neighborhood.



**Mary Barroll:**

Why do you think your nomination stood out among so many other worthy volunteers?

**Cecilia Ching Yee Leung:**

I think because the center is in a very well, a lot of problems, situations and I have been working in the center for over 21 years. I volunteer about 150 to 200 hours per year to volunteer in this area. And then another reason is because I am fluent in English written and verbal and Chinese, Cantonese, and Mandarin.

And then I have been working here for so long so I can mentor the new volunteers and sometimes the staff changing so I can give some advice to them.

**Mary Barroll:**

We would like to finish off our 2023 CharityVillage Awards Gala with some final thoughts from our award winners.

**Shannon Caskey:**

Fundraising isn't the easiest, it's a grind and it can be challenging and as you've mentioned the economy you know is especially over the last couple of years, there's new challenges that come up and it's a lot of chasing at times, the end of the day you know you're not going to see your name in bright lights as a fundraiser. You're a person sort of behind the scenes, you've got these incredible amazing donors who are making the impact, you have these incredible people on the program delivery and service delivery side and you know your amazing beneficiaries who receive all this great care.

**Kat Vriesema-Magnuson:**

We spend so much time doing the work, but we don't often take as much time as we should to sit back and reflect on what we've done and our successes. Just going through the process of applying for this award really helped us focus and understand what we were already doing.

**Misha Goforth:**

So, it's easy to kind of forget about longevity of career and where are we all trying to grow towards and what are our personal goals. So that's something that I've really seen prioritized in the last year or so.

In the nonprofit sector, you always care about the work that you're doing and you're always surrounded by folks who are like-minded moving in that same direction. But knowing as well that as individuals we're growing forward also is really meaningful.

**Taya Rtichsheva**

To be a winner of such a prestigious and national level award as a CharityVillage Award is the big achievement and recognition, not just by nonprofit and charitable communities and sector, but also by the community in the whole. So that's why I think it is great to be selected and I feel really thankful for this opportunity.

**Cecilia Ching Yee Leung:**

I think that it is important that everybody can contribute, and I have time. So, whenever I can, I will offer myself just to help others and hope that everybody will have a better life in the society and the community. So, I'm just doing my part.

**Mary Barroll:**

Congratulations to all our amazing winners and finalists. At CharityVillage, we are honoured to present these awards to the truly outstanding individuals and organizations who overcome obstacles and contribute to the betterment of their workplaces, their communities, the nonprofit sector, and to Canada.

For a full list of our 2023 Award winners – including those who were not able to take part in this podcast – plus complete video interviews, visit our awards website, [charityvillageconference dot com](http://charityvillageconference.com). That's [charityvillageconference dot com](http://charityvillageconference.com).

CharityVillage is proud to be the Canadian source for nonprofit news, employment, crowdfunding, e-learning, and so much more. You can find us online at [charityvillage dot com](http://charityvillage.com).

On the next CharityVillage Connects podcast, with Canadian nonprofits notoriously slow when it comes to investing in new technology, will they be left behind when it comes to the new Artificial Intelligence tools that are poised to revolutionize our world? In the next episode of CharityVillage Connects, we'll take a hard look at the benefits AI has to offer nonprofit organizations, as well as its potential drawbacks. Is there a responsible way to harness the power of AI for social good? And is the sector ready for yet another challenge to the way it traditionally operates? AI and Nonprofits, next time on CharityVillage Connects. I'm Mary Barroll. Thanks for listening.