



Skills for Change

Building Welcoming and Equitable Communities

# Pioneers for Change

*An awards show celebrating  
immigrant excellence*

September 14, 2023

**DESIGN EXCHANGE**  
234 Bay St. Toronto, ON

Powered by:

KINROSS



ELEVATE



# AGENDA

**6:00PM – 7:00PM** COCKTAIL HOUR  
NETWORKING  
REGISTRATION  
SITAR PERFORMANCE BY SWARN LATA  
HOT DOCS ACTIVATION

**7:00PM – 8:00PM** KEYNOTE SPEAKER: SENATOR CARDOZA  
AWARDS CEREMONY

**7:30PM – 9:00PM** DINNER

**9:00PM – MIDNIGHT** GALA  
NETWORKING  
MUSIC BY DJ ELEGANCE

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

To our award recipients and esteemed guests;

It is with immense gratitude and enthusiasm that I welcome you to the 30th Pioneers for Change Fundraiser Gala.

Tonight, we gather not just in celebration of our collective efforts and progress but also in acknowledgment of the powerful potential that lies ahead.

30 years ago, Skills for Change launched the *New Pioneers Awards* — the original *Pioneers for Change* event — was launched to recognize the outstanding work that immigrants are doing every day in this great country. Pioneers for Change represents the vision of a diverse and inclusive Canada. It is an ongoing commitment to identify the achievements of immigrants as well as breaking down barriers so that newcomers not only succeed but thrive. Pioneers for Change are nation builders, incredible people who have made a significant and lasting contribution to Canada. As nation builders, they inspire newcomers to work toward their own success and follow their vision. They are exemplary citizens, who have an immigrant story to tell. Today, we stand on the precipice of change, with each one of you playing a vital role in shaping a brighter, more equitable future. The journey we're on is both challenging and rewarding, and your commitment, passion, and resilience have been the cornerstone of our achievements.

The stories we'll share, the connections we'll make, and the funds we'll raise tonight will be a testament to our collective belief that change is possible when we come together as one.

I'd like to personally thank our award recipients for all the exceptional and progressive work they've done, and for sharing their stories with us here tonight. Each of our award recipients continue to make a positive impact in Canadian society and I am grateful for everything they've accomplished so far. I'd like to also thank our corporate and community partners, including, and not limited to, CPA Ontario, Kinross, Design Exchange, Elevate, The City of Toronto Thank you for being trailblazers, for believing in our mission, and for dedicating your time, energy, and resources towards our shared vision.

Here's to a night of inspiration, celebration, and looking forward to the countless possibilities our united efforts can bring forth.

With deepest gratitude,



**Surranna Sandy**  
CEO of Skills for Change

# ABOUT SKILLS FOR CHANGE

## OUR VISION

Our Vision is for a Canada where everyone has equal opportunities to succeed. We are committed to striving for a Canada where newcomers and other underserved individuals have access to opportunities that empower them to succeed personally and professionally. Our approach to achieving this is supporting clients through strong partnerships, employment and sector relevant programs, and amplifying our voice in sector dialogue on immigration.

## OUR MISSION

We work with newcomers and underserved groups providing holistic solutions that bridge the gap between potential and opportunity for success in Canada. Our mission is to enhance skill sets, opportunities, and access to good work for newcomers and underserved groups across Canada.

## CORE VALUES

### CLIENT-CENTERED

Our primary focus is on our clients, the immigrants and refugees who have come to our communities to create a life for themselves and their families.

### ENGAGEMENT

We engage all stakeholders to produce meaningful results. All staff play a critical role in serving as catalysts for the success of our clients.

### RESPECT

We respect and value the diversity of our team, and those we serve. We behave with integrity, compassion, and empathy to ensure that all persons are treated with dignity.

### RELATIONSHIPS

We build and maintain relationships that are mutually beneficial for our clients and employers, thereby making a positive contribution to the Canadian economy and broader society.

### EXCELLENCE

We deliver quality and excellence in all that we do. We pursue new and pioneering ideas in our efforts to serve both clients, and employers.

### RESULTS

We deliver measurable results and create positive impact through our work. We hold ourselves accountable for the commitments made in our Mission and Vision.

# TONIGHT'S CAUSE: MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Our service is culturally and linguistically appropriate and readily accessible to every participant registered in Skills for Change programs including 2SLGBTQI+, newcomers, youth, women and seniors from diverse culture, ethnicity, gender and sexual expression.

We try to include language interpretation for the clients who needed this very import support due to cultural and linguistic differences.

We offer referral counselling and other supports for clients' needs are outside of the program scope.

Visit our website at

**[www.skillsforchange.org/mental-health-services](http://www.skillsforchange.org/mental-health-services)** or email us at **[mentalhealth@skillsforchange.org](mailto:mentalhealth@skillsforchange.org)** to learn more.



## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORT



# PIONEERS FOR CHANGE AWARD WINNERS



**ANNAYAH JEAN  
(AJ) FERNANDEZ  
RIVERA**

Managing Director  
of Accenture  
Canada

**Advocacy Award**

Annayah Jean (AJ) Fernandez Rivera is a managing director at Accenture, leading Technology and Operations in both Sales and Delivery for Canada. She plays a key leadership role, bringing innovation and global expertise to Accenture's clients, to help them transform their businesses, increase revenue, and gain competitive advantage. An out and proud transgender woman, AJ is a passionate advocate for diversity and inclusion who is willing to step up and share her story with the world.

In 2022, she was recognized by The Globe and Mail as one of Canada's 50 Best Executives and was featured in their cover story. A key member of the leadership team, AJ helps attract top talent to Accenture. She is the Executive Sponsor of Accenture Canada's PRIDE employee resource group, the Co-Executive Sponsor for Women in Technology, and the Accenture Canada Technology Inclusion & Diversity Lead. In her 25 years at Accenture, her career has spanned across Asia, Europe, and North America. Working with Fortune 500 companies in a variety of industries, including financial services, retail, consumer goods, travel, health and public services, AJ has helped expand Accenture's regional business presence.

As a frequent speaker and panelist at technology conferences, AJ openly addresses barriers for 2SLGBTQ+ people to thrive in the tech industry and is committed to creating a safe tech ecosystem, where employees can bring their most authentic selves to work, regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation.

AJ is committed to giving back to the community and led the partnership of Accenture and Pasarelle Numerique's CSR initiative in which Accenture provided funding for a 3-year education program. Pasarelle Numerique (Digital Bridges) is a French NGO that provides access to IT education and job opportunities to underprivileged youth of the Philippines, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

Her personal interests include reading and binge-watching sci-fi/fantasy series, travelling to new places, practicing yoga and meditation.



**DR. EILEEN DE VILLA**

Chief Medical Officer of the City of Toronto

**STEM Innovation Award**

Dr. Eileen de Villa is the Medical Officer of Health for the City of Toronto. In this position, she leads Toronto Public Health, the largest local public health agency in Canada, which offers various programs and services to the city's more than 3 million residents.

Dr. de Villa received her Doctor of Medicine and Master of Health Science (MHSc) degree in Health Promotion from the University of Toronto. Additionally, she holds a Master of Business Administration from the Schulich School of Business at York University. She is also an Adjunct Professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto.

As the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. de Villa has been at the forefront of public health efforts in Toronto, including guiding the largest vaccination campaign in Toronto's history during the COVID-19 pandemic. She has also advised elected officials on implementing municipal government measures such as declaring a state of emergency and introducing local bylaws related to physical distancing and mask usage – all aimed at curbing the transmission of COVID-19.

Dr. de Villa's unwavering dedication to guiding Toronto through the pandemic has been evident in her tireless efforts to equip residents with the necessary tools and information to protect themselves and their communities. Dr. de Villa maintains a pivotal advisory role in the City and Province's ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery.



**ELAMIN ABDELMAHMOUD**

Author and Host of CBC's Commotion

**Arts & Entertainment Award**

Elamin Abdelmahmoud is the host of CBC's daily arts, entertainment and pop culture show Commotion.

He is an award-winning culture writer who has written for The New York Times, BuzzFeed News, the Globe and Mail and others. Elamin is the author of the No. 1 best-selling memoir *Son of Elsewhere*, a New York Times notable book and a Globe 100 book. Please don't ask him about his second book yet.



**MURALY  
SRINARAYANATHAS**

Founder of 369  
Global and CEO of  
ComputeK College

**Entrepreneurship  
Award**

Muraly Srinarayanathas is a serial entrepreneur and global strategist. He serves as the Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of 369 Global, an international group of companies in the education, finance, creative, entertainment, and venture capital sectors. Muraly is considered a specialist in consumer culture and the immigrant market, namely for his unique immigration journey, international experience, and rich data collection from the business entities he leads.

Muraly is the son of first-generation immigrant parents. He was born in the United Kingdom but spent much of his life unbounded by borders and lived in Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America. For over 25 years, he worked closely with immigrants in their local communities and built several successful businesses from the ground up across the globe.

Gleaned from his global experience, Muraly recognizes the power of diversity and the need for brands to prioritize both global consumer culture (GCC) and local consumer culture (LCC) principles to connect with diverse audiences. Whether it's a local woman living in Kolkata, India, or an immigrant woman from Kolkata, India, living in Waterloo, Ontario, Muraly understands how organizations can leverage consumer insights to attract, communicate, and build long-term relationships with local and global audiences, and ultimately scale businesses from the ground up.

Muraly is a strong believer in the power of philanthropy and launched his first social purpose business under the guidance of Dr. Muhammad Yunus, the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. He continues to apply a borderless perspective to bring diverse groups of people together around a common goal.

Muraly leads powerful initiatives that aim to create a sustainable and equitable future for all. As the Executive Chairman of 369 Global, he globalizes public and private sector leaders from around the world and forms partnerships to support local, national, and international growth. As the Chief Executive Officer of ComputeK College, a leading career college of 30+ years, Muraly helps train thousands of newcomers and immigrants to become job-ready and life-ready in Canada. Through 369Kconnect, an integrated marketing agency, he helps brands attract and meaningfully connect with diverse consumers.

Because giving back is a core focus of the group, Muraly also helps protect and improve holistic outcomes for underrepresented global communities through the Srinarayanathas Foundation, a charitable foundation with a hundred-year legacy.





**DR. MOHINDER GROVER**

Electrical Engineer

**Skills for Change Alumni Award**

Dr. Mohinder Grover is an electrical engineer specializing in Dependability (a collective term for Reliability, Maintainability, Availability and Maintenance Support) and Quality Assurance. In his over 40 years in the nuclear industry, he has worked at Ontario Hydro (OH), Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) and Candu Energy. At OH / OPG, he won several accolades for his technical and volunteer work. He was awarded AECL President's Distinguished Merit Award in 2008 for demonstrating leadership and technical excellence in Quality Management / Quality Assurance. In 2001, for his exceptional volunteer work, Pickering Nuclear awarded Dr. Grover the Volunteer Service Medal to mark the Year of Volunteers.

Dr. Grover has been volunteering for several technical and charitable organizations. He has been a supporter and mentor at Skills for Change for almost 20 years, and has mentored several International Engineering graduates over those years helping them settle in Canada, find a job and / or obtain Professional Engineer License in Ontario. Several of his mentees have remained in contact with him much after the formal mentoring relationship had come to an end. In recognition of his mentor work, Skills for Change has awarded Certificates of Appreciation to Dr. Grover. Dr. Grover says that by helping his mentees to achieve their goals, he drives a lot of joy and satisfaction by being a part of their success. Dr. Grover also mentors for Professional Engineers Ontario, Standards Council of Canada and World Sikh Organization.

In addition to Skills for Change, Dr. Grover has been volunteering at several professional and charitable organizations. To name a few, this includes Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) Technical Committee 56, United Way, White Ribbon Campaign, Terry Fox Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, Gursikh Sabha Canada (A Sikh place of worship), and Mosaic Interfaith.

Dr. Grover has represented Canada on the IEC Technical Committee 56 for over 30 years. In 2012, he was awarded the prestigious 1906 IEC award in recognition of his long standing and distinguished service to IEC in its standardization work.

For his many years of volunteer work with different organizations, Dr. Grover has been bestowed with several honours and awards, both by technical and charitable organizations.

Some of these honours/awards include: Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers awarded by the Governor General of Canada (2022), invested as a Member and then later on as Officer of the PEO Order of Honour (2017 & 2022), **(more)**

**DR. MOHINDER GROVE**

(contd.)

Appointed as the Fellow of Engineers Canada (FEC) (2010), Engineering Institute of Canada (FEIC) (2017), and Canadian Nuclear Society (FCNS) (2021), Letters of appreciation given by Terry Fox Foundation for raising funds (~\$ 60,000) by participating in Terry Fox Run for 38 consecutive years, Certificate of appreciation by Standards Council of Canada for 30 years of volunteer contribution (2020)), recognition by PEO for 20 years of volunteer service to engineering profession (2019), honour bestowed by the Premier of Ontario (by Order-in-Council) with appointment to Ontario Honours and Awards Advisory Council (2016–2019), Meritorious Service Award for Community Service conferred by Engineers Canada (2013), Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship invested by the Government of Ontario (2010), several Volunteer Services awards given by the Government of Ontario (2011 – 2019), Citizenship Award presented by PEO & Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) (2009), and several others.

Dr. Grover has been a registered professional engineer in Ontario since 1976. He obtained his M.Sc., and PhD degrees in Electrical Engineering from the University of Saskatchewan in 1972 and 1974 respectively.



**PAULETTE SENIOR**

President & CEO of the Canadian Women's Foundation

**Impact Changemaker Award**

Paulette Senior is President & CEO of the Canadian Women's Foundation. She has devoted her career to empowering women and girls to overcome barriers and reach their full potential.

Paulette started her career on the front lines of social service organizations in some of Toronto's most underserved neighbourhoods. Her work and advocacy with shelters, as well as employment and housing programs, paved the way toward leadership roles at national organizations. She served as CEO of YWCA Canada for 10 years before joining the Canadian Women's Foundation as CEO in 2016. Her work with the Foundation is guided by the vision of an inclusive, national movement toward gender equity that will strengthen all Canadians.

Throughout her career, she has earned numerous awards and become one of the most respected women leaders and speakers in Canada. Paulette is a member of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council, an advisory body that develops recommendations on gender equality issues across the G7 agenda. In 2021, she received an honorary doctorate of laws from the University of Lethbridge. She is featured in the book *Inspiring Canadians: 40 Brilliant Canadians and Their Visions for the Nation*.



**RANIA  
LLEWELLYN**

President and CEO  
of Laurentian Bank

**Immigrant of the  
Year Award**

Rania Llewellyn is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Laurentian Bank. Her appointment in 2020 was history in the making as she became the first woman to lead a major Canadian chartered bank. Under Rania's leadership, Laurentian is a very different bank than it was two years ago. She quickly set into motion a new three-year strategic plan centred around the customer and underpinned by a new purpose to change banking for the better by seeing beyond numbers to bring hopes and dreams to life.

Having immigrated from the Middle East in her teenage years, it's precisely these hopes and dreams of other new Canadians that Rania shares, and yet she keenly understands the many barriers they face. The challenges and opportunities she has experienced, both as an immigrant and a woman in a male-dominated industry, has inspired her to build the bank she always wanted to work for – one with a culture that views equality, diversity and inclusion as strengths and where everyone feels like they belong and has the chance to thrive. Her relentless focus on improving the customer experience and driving growth and shareholder value has earned her wide recognition and awards, including the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Business Leader of the Year Award in 2023, being named on Maclean's 2022 The Power List, and being included as one of the Top 25 Women of Influence in 2021.

Rania's career in banking spans more than 27 years. Prior to joining Laurentian, she held various leadership roles at Scotiabank, where she began her career as a part-time teller. She holds Bachelor of Commerce and MBA degrees from Saint Mary's University where she focused on Finance, Marketing and International Business. In 2022, Ontario Tech University awarded her with an Honorary Doctor of Laws, and she received an Honorary Doctor of Commerce from Saint Mary's in 2014.

# PERFORMERS



**DR. LATA SWARN**

Sitar Performer

Dr. Lata Swarn is the Founder and Director of the Sitar Darpan School of Music. She is a teacher, performer, and author. Her book: "The Journey of the Sitar in Indian Classical Music" is available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Chapters, and Indigo in the form of a hard cover, soft cover and as an eBook. Her website is [www.sitardarpan.com](http://www.sitardarpan.com) She does music therapy for mental health. "Help the humanity, you will be healed".

In addition to music education, she has her website for Reiki healing which can be found at [swarnlata.com](http://swarnlata.com). She does hands on healing to heal the sick in person and distance healing as well.

She spends time in creative activities such as painting, knitting, jewelry making, gardening, composing music, reading books, spending time with family and loves volunteering.



**DJ ELEGANCE**

DJ

Being active in the Toronto business and social nightlife (2007 – 2010) scene for over a decade organizing events became something that came naturally to us (music, sound and event logistics). This roller coaster ride led us to produce a variety of events in the not for profit and for-profit sector.

Our goal is to develop unique and signature experiences to assist brides, grooms, event managers and other key decision makers with their events.

Having produced hundreds of successful events (Corporate leadership Speakers Series, Brand Launches, Ambassador Programs, Community Festivals) and a range of other events. In 2010 we decided to re-align our services to a wider demographic and specialize in supporting Corporate/Special Events, Weddings, Private Affairs and Retail communities. We're also firm believers in supporting local or community events and giving back to youth.

We pay attention to the tiny details, love to have fun and equip you with the proper information to have the best event possible.

Our mission: We want people to remember your event for the next 50 years.

hotdocs presents

# CITIZEN MINUTES

VIEWING AVAILABLE IN THE LOBBY

Commissioned by Hot Docs, the Citizen Minutes project is a short doc collection that highlights ordinary Canadians doing extraordinary things to make their communities better places. The project engages filmmakers from across the country to create short films about bold and unlikely change-makers who inspire us to jump in and get involved in civic issues close to our homes and hearts.

In 2022, Hot Docs partnered with Skills for Change to host 5 virtual screenings featuring 6 Citizen Minutes films followed by a panel discussion with filmmakers, participants and community organizations. The Reels for Change series was a spin-off of their existing Spotlight Series, which has acted as a change evangelist in initiating more open discussions around socio-economic barriers that have plagued our societies, especially the racialized and marginalized communities. Guest speakers and moderators included Teresa Alfeld, Carmen Pollard, Nneka MacGregor, Zach Jama, Roble Issa, Shamsou Elmi, Shamsou Mohamoud, Javier Lovera, JJ Thomson, Earla Philips, Aisha Fairclough and Jill Andrew.

# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS AND PARTNERS



## VENUE PARTNERS



## TABLE SPONSORS





# A proud sponsor of the 2023 Pioneers for Change Gala!



At Kinross, we champion inclusion and diversity. Our operations span three continents and we are comprised of people of all backgrounds.

Diversity is a key part of our culture and we actively advance our inclusion and diversity efforts to be a Company where all **employees feel valued and respected**.

**Our diverse workforce makes us stronger** and it unlocks greater value for our business.

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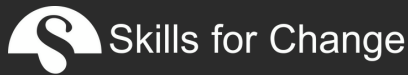


**NEW CANADIANS**



# **EMPOWERING NEWCOMERS TO BUILD THEIR CANADIAN SUCCESS STORY**





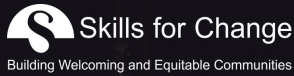
Skills for Change

# annual general meeting 2023


9  
28  
6-8pm





register for our  
free virtual event




# CONNECT WITH US


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