

Habitat for Humanity Canada – Providing a hand up

Canada is recognized globally as one of the best countries to live in, and part of this is due to the high standards of housing and environment that we enjoy. However, it is not immune to the challenges of housing accessibility and affordability faced by low-income communities such as those living in aboriginal communities and inner-city areas. But difficult as these challenges are, they are even more acute in emerging economies and developing countries like India, where the problems are exacerbated by a large population and increasing imbalance in supply and demand, especially as millions are moving from rural to urban areas in search of livelihoods. In addition, limited access to housing finance (which most Canadians take for granted) makes it even more challenging for lower-income households to meet their housing needs.

Founded in 1985, Habitat for Humanity Canada is a national, non-profit organization working towards a world where everyone has a safe and decent place to live. With the help of over 63,000 volunteers every year and 58 affiliate organizations from coast to coast, their mission is to mobilize volunteers and community partners in building affordable housing and promoting homeownership as a means to break the cycle of poverty in Canada and around the world. Habitat for Humanity Canada is a member of Habitat for Humanity International, which has built, rehabilitated, repaired or improved more than 1 million houses worldwide, providing better shelter for more than 5 million people. For more information, please visit www.habitat.ca

Jayshree Thakar, National Manager, Aboriginal Housing Program at Habitat for Humanity Canada, along with her colleague at Habitat; and a long time Global Village supporter will share some of the efforts undertaken by Habitat at home, as well as in the international arena through its Global Village Program. Jay will provide a broad overview of Habitat's work while **Bryan Macdonald**, Global Village Team Leader, who has just returned from Goa building a home for a partner family will share some wonderful stories, and **Alexis Ashworth**, CEO of Habitat Canada National Capital Region, will talk about some of the exciting projects under way in the Ottawa area.

Panel of Speakers:

Jayshree Thakar, National Manager Aboriginal Housing Program, Habitat for Humanity Canada

Jay leads Habitat for Humanity Canada's Aboriginal Housing Program. Over the last five years, well over 100 Aboriginal families have realized their dream of affordable homeownership. She passionately pursues the cause and envisions that many more Aboriginal families will partner with Habitat in coming years.

Jay retired from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in early 2012. Prior to retirement as Director of Business Development with CMHC's International Division she promoted the core principles of Canada's housing and mortgage-finance system globally; and pursued business opportunities for Canada's housing export industry in foreign markets. CMHC's work in India enabled introduction of mortgage guaranty in India that helps middle income households realize their dream of affordable homeownership. As an Architect-Planner launched her career in Ottawa in 1978 and worked with Canada's largest Builders and Developers.



Bryan McDonald, Team Leader (Global Village)

Bryan McDonald lives in Ottawa, Ontario. He is a general contractor who spends his working days renovating older homes. Bryan is married with 2 kids of his own and he and his wife have had numerous foster kids over the past 15 yrs. Since his first Habitat trip to Costa Rica, Bryan has been captivated by the Habitat spirit and hopes to be able to go on 2 builds per year. India was his 11th Habitat trip, 10th as a leader. He has been to Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Jordan three times, Cambodia, Bolivia, Portugal, Nepal and China with Habitat. His wife has recently started going on Habitat builds and is trying to catch up on his number of builds. When he is not working, and weather permitting, Bryan can usually be found pursuing his passion of sailing or riding his motorcycle.

Alexis Ashworth Bio

Alexis is the CEO of Habitat for Humanity National Capital Region and has been passionate about the organization since 2004 when she became their Executive Director in Halifax. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Finance) and an MBA in International Development Management. Born and raised in Halifax, Alexis has lived and work in various countries around the world. Alexis' international interest is taking her to Ethiopia for a 2015 Habitat Global Village build.

Alexis' career has spanned from the investment industry to banking to non-profit. Volunteerism and community involvement has been an important part of her life, having served as a Big Sister with Big Brothers and Sisters, a board member for Fusion Halifax, a Connector for recent immigrants with the Greater Halifax Partnership, and a judge for Youth in Motion's Top 20 Under 20 awards.

In her time away from work, Alexis is passionate about tennis, yoga, cycling and her pup Samuel Barkett (Sammy).