

Digital Access Day

Bridging the Digital Divide: Ensuring Access for All

February 11, 2025
8:30 PM – 5:00 PM - *Networking Reception to Follow*
Dominion Chalmers - CarletonU
290 Lisgar Street Entrance

SPEAKER BIOS

Tim Powers, Chair, Summa Strategies | Managing Director, Abacus Data



Tim Powers is originally from St. John's, NL, and is the Chair of Summa Strategies, a leading Canadian public affairs consulting firm, and the Managing Director of Abacus Data, an opinion research company, headquartered in Ottawa.

Tim is an owner of the Dominion City Brewing Company and Almanac Urban Mill and Bakery located in Eastern Ontario.

He is the host of the "Tim Powers Show" on VOXM radio in Newfoundland and Labrador as well as a regular contributor to CBC's "Power and Politics". He writes a weekly column for "The Hill Times" newspaper. He serves as guest host of "The Vassy Kapelos Show" on the IHeart Radio Network.

Currently, Tim serves on the boards of Memorial University, where he chairs the university's benefits committee and the Jack Purcell Recreation Association. He is also a Class B member of the Canadian Olympic Committee. He is the Chair of Rugby Canada's Lifetime Achievement Award committee. And is the Head Coach of the U10B Ottawa Sting competitive hockey team.

Tim is a past Chairperson of Rugby Canada, Past Lead Director of the Park Lawn Corporation, and a former trustee at the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH). He was also a director of the board of Melanoma Canada.

Tim has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Memorial University of Newfoundland, a Master of Arts degree (Atlantic Canada Studies) from St. Mary's University, and a Master of Sciences degree (Media and Communications) from the London School of Economics. Mr. Powers has also studied Public Sector Management, Alternative Investing, and Sustainable Investing at Harvard University. He is a graduate of the Institute of Corporate Directors (ICD) and has his ICD.D designation. Tim also is a Boston Marathon finisher having completed the 126th Boston Marathon in April 2022. He represented Canada for 2 seasons in U21 age-grade rugby. He also served as the head coach of

Mount Allison's men's rugby team when they won the Maritime University Championship in 1996.

Matthew Gamble, Founder, Int13 Consulting | Vice Chair, The Canadian Internet Society



Matthew M. Gamble is a seasoned technologist and innovator with over 25 years of experience shaping the future of telecommunications and cloud technologies. A tireless advocate for a free and open internet, he is passionate about leveraging disruptive technologies to drive meaningful change in how people and businesses connect.

As Chief Innovation Officer at Int13 Consulting, a Toronto-based firm, Matthew spearheads the creation of advanced AI, cloud, and voice solutions. His work focuses on bridging complex challenges with practical innovations, enabling enterprise and service provider clients to adapt and excel in dynamic markets.

An NFL owner and respected thought leader, Matthew combines deep technical expertise with a vision for fostering innovation that drives impact. Whether through his advocacy, professional leadership, or industry insights, he remains dedicated to advancing connectivity and technology for the benefit of all.

Christine Van Geyn, Litigation Director, Canadian Constitution Foundation | Lawyer | Author



Christine Van Geyn is a Canadian lawyer and bestselling author. She is the Litigation Director of the [Canadian Constitution Foundation](#) and host of the national broadcast television program [Canadian Justice](#). She is a [YouTuber](#), [Podcaster](#), and [professional speaker](#).

Christine earned her undergraduate degree in Political Science and Ethics, Society and Law at the University of Toronto, Trinity College. Christine earned her JD at Osgoode Hall Law School and also studied at New York University School of Law. She was called to the bar in Ontario in 2012.

Before joining CCF, Christine practiced commercial litigation and then was the Ontario Director of a national non-profit where she was involved in several high-profile constitutional challenges.

Kinga Petrovai, PhD, Principal, Workplace Learning Consultant & Podcaster, The Art & Science of Learning Inc.



Dr. Kinga Petrovai is a workplace learning consultant and podcaster with a doctorate in learning technologies from Oxford University and an M.Ed. from Harvard University. Drawing on her background as an electrical engineer, Kinga brings an analytical and systems-thinking lens to designing ways for people to learn and develop skills in the workplace. She works at the intersection of research and practice, developing research, evaluating, advising, and designing learning solutions to improve skills in the workplace. She has worked with a variety of organizations, universities, the Government of Canada, and the U. S. Department of

State. On The Art & Science of Learning podcast, Kinga interviews global leaders in learning, with listeners in 100 countries. She can be found on LinkedIn and at www.TASL.ca.

Shelley Robinson, Executive Director, National Capital FreeNet



Shelley Robinson is Executive Director of National Capital FreeNet, a not-for-profit internet provider committed to advancing digital equity and ensuring people have access to affordable, high-quality internet that they can understand how to use, while feeling safe online. Shelley has worked to ensure community participation in communications throughout her career, including managing a community newspaper on the peaceline in Belfast, working with a women's community radio station in Afghanistan, managing a journalism-training program for Carleton University in

Rwanda and leading Canada's National Campus and Community Radio Association.

Dr. Wendy Cukier, Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Ted Rogers School of Management at Toronto Metropolitan University; Founder and Academic Director, Diversity Institute; Academic Director, Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH); Academic Research Director, Future Skills Centre



Dr. Wendy Cukier is the Diversity Institute Founder, Academic Director of the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, and Academic Research Lead of the Future Skills Centre. She is the co-author of the bestseller, *Innovation Nation: Canadian Leadership from Java to Jurassic Park* and former VP of Research and Innovation.

The Diversity Institute has 130 research staff, 100 research associates from around the world, 200 industry partners and focuses on dimensions of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, future skills, and entrepreneurship and innovation. Harnessing the power of innovation, it promotes the advancement of underrepresented groups. The Diversity Institute is also a research lead for the \$300 million Future Skills Centre and the \$8.6 million Women Entrepreneurship Hub.

Matthew Johnson, Director of Education, MediaSmarts



Matthew Johnson is the Director of Education for MediaSmarts, Canada's centre for digital and media literacy. He is the author of many of MediaSmarts' lessons, parent materials, and interactive resources and is the architect of MediaSmarts' Use, Understand, Engage: Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian K-12 Schools.

He has served on expert panels convened by the Canadian Pediatric Society, the Sexual Information and Education Council of Canada, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, among others.

Dr. Michael Geist, Professor of Law, Canada Research Chair, Internet & E-commerce Law, University of Ottawa



Dr. Michael Geist is a law professor at the University of Ottawa where he holds the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-Commerce Law and is a member of the Centre for Law, Technology and Society. He has obtained a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) degree from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees from Cambridge University in the UK and Columbia Law School in New York, and a Doctorate in Law (J.S.D.) from Columbia Law School.

Dr. Geist's column on technology law issues regularly appears in the *Globe and Mail*. He is the editor of several copyright books including *The Copyright Pentalogy: How the Supreme Court of Canada Shook the Foundations of Canadian Copyright Law*, the editor of several monthly technology law publications, and the author of a popular blog on Internet and intellectual property law issues.

He has received numerous awards for his work, such as Canarie's IWAY Public Leadership Award and the Kroeger Award for Policy Leadership, was named one of the 25 most influential lawyers in Canada by *Canadian Lawyer*, and was appointed to the Order of Ontario in 2018.

Brent Arnold, Partner, Gowling WLG



Brent J. Arnold is a partner practicing in Gowling WLG's advocacy department. His practice focuses on cyber security and commercial litigation and he heads the firm's commercial litigation technology sub-group. His experience includes cyber breach coaching, cyber risk analysis, class actions defense, Web3 (including cryptocurrency and metaverse) and other technology, software, and e-commerce disputes, administrative and insolvency law, shareholders' rights, and general contractual disputes. He has appeared before numerous administrative tribunals and all levels of court in Ontario as well as the Supreme Court of Canada. He currently serves as steering committee chairman for the cybersecurity and data privacy section of the US-based Defence Research Institute (DRI). He also chairs the Ontario Bar Association's privacy and access to information law section. He is a vice chairman of the cyber security, data privacy, and technology committee of the invitation-only International Association of Defense Counsel. He co-authored the Advocate Society's *Paperless Trials Manual* and is a frequent author and speaker on cybersecurity, courtroom innovation, and electronic trials.

Bram Abramson, Commissioner, Ontario, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)



Bram Abramson serves as Commissioner, Ontario, at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), bringing a wealth of expertise in telecommunications, media, and technology policy. With a background as a telecom industry analyst and communications lawyer, Bram has worked extensively at the intersection of regulation and innovation, advocating for equitable digital access, sustainable connectivity, and a rich and diverse marketplace of ideas. As a public servant, he focuses on fostering inclusive, pervasive, and secure network and media environments, and is passionate about seeing all Canadians benefit from advancements in the digital economy.

Natalie Campbell, Senior Director, North America Government and Regulatory Affairs, Internet Society



Natalie Campbell is Senior Director, North America Government and Regulatory Affairs at the Internet Society, a global non-profit organization that works for an open, globally-connected, secure, and trustworthy Internet. She is passionate about helping people understand how policy decisions and trends could impact the Internet and leads advocacy efforts to grow, protect, and defend an Internet for everyone. She helped develop

the first [Internet Impact Assessment Toolkit](#) as a resource for policymakers to protect the Internet, and supports the Internet Society's work to promote community-led Internet access solutions with a focus on Indigenous communities in North America. Prior to joining the Internet Society, Natalie was founder of Campbell Communications, a consultancy specializing in advocacy and strategic communications. She has also worked at the Canadian Internet Registration Authority, where she helped establish the Canadian Internet Forum.

Phalen Tynes-MacDonald, Deputy Editor, The Wire Report



Phalen Tynes-MacDonald is the deputy editor of *The Wire Report*, where he specializes in reporting on Canada's telecom, broadcasting, and digital sectors. Originally from Halifax, Phalen's global upbringing — spanning Korea, Malawi, China and beyond — has fueled his passion for storytelling and given him a unique perspective on technology's role in bridging our communities. A graduate of Carleton University's journalism program, Phalen has also contributed to publications including *Capital Current*, *The Charlatan*, *Ottawa Citizen*, and *Down to the Wire Studios*.

Erin Keeley- Messier, Program Manager, iSisters Technology Mentoring



Erin Keeley-Messier is the Program Manager at iSisters Technology Mentoring, a charity that supports and empowers women and gender diverse people through technology and employability training. Before iSisters, Erin lived in Edinburgh, Scotland, where she gained over 10 years experience in the non-profit sector, supporting people with multiple barriers into education and employment.

With iSisters for over three years now, Erin works closely with partner organizations and learners to provide tailored digital literacy and employability training to women in need, with a strong focus on confidence and community building. She firmly believes that equipping women with the skills to succeed is foundational for building a better world.

David Akin, Chief Political Correspondent, Global News



Award-winning journalist David Akin covers Canadian federal and electoral politics and is currently Chief Political Correspondent for Global News where his work is featured on [Global National](#), on Global news programs across the country, on Global News Radio stations, and at [GlobalNews.ca](#). Akin has covered seven federal elections and more than two dozen provincial elections. He has reported from several G7, G20, APEC, and

other international summits of heads of government. Akin received a Gemini Award for his reporting while he was a correspondent for CTV National News and received a National Newspaper Award for his political reporting for the National Post. Akin has long been one of Canada's journalism pioneers when it comes to exploring ways to use digital media and computer-assisted tools for newsgathering and publishing. A Montrealer by birth, Akin studied history at the University of Guelph. He lives near Ottawa with his wife and two children.

Michel Mersereau, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto



Michel Mersereau is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, with a research focus on the logistical nature of digital infrastructure, household broadband use, and the political economy of urban telecommunications markets. Michel served as a senior management and policy consultant at the City of Toronto, where he led research and policy development for the city's ConnectTO program, telecommunications planning, digital equity strategy, and universal free public WiFi program. He is a member of Computers for Success Canada's Scientific Advisory Committee evaluating the Connecting Families program, and his research has informed policy interventions at both ISED and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

Asennaienton Frank Horn, Director, Workforce Development, Indigenous Connectivity Institute



For over 20 years, Asennaienton has worked with indigenous communities predominantly in Ontario & Quebec and understands first-hand the infrastructure gap. He is committed to working with industry partners and advocates in the broadband space so that indigenous communities can fully participate in the future opportunities that reliable and affordable access to internet offers!

Asennaienton is a proud Kanien'keha:ke from the sister communities of Kahnawake and Kanesatake in Quebec and has dedicated his professional career & volunteerism to indigenous community including raising over 1000 hockey bags each year for indigenous youth across Canada.

Georgia Evans, Board Member, The Canadian Internet Society



Georgia Evans is a Public Affairs Specialist at CIRA, the Canadian Internet Registration Authority. Through her role at CIRA, she also fulfills the duties of the Secretariat at the Canadian Internet Governance Forum. She has previously worked with DigitalMedusa on an evaluative project of Canada's fulfillment of the Christchurch Call, and during her time as an independent policy consultant completed projects about competition policy in Canada. Evans holds a Bachelor's of Public Affairs and Policy Management (Strategic Public Opinion) from Carleton University.

Vandana Kattar, Head of Communications, Global Diversity and Inclusion & Environment and Social Governance, TD Bank



Vandana has had over 15 years of experience in politics, including campaigns across all three levels of Government. She has worked at Queens Park, in Federal Opposition and most recently as Director of Operations, Outreach and Planning at the Prime Minister's Office.

Vandana has been a long time advocate for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and was a champion for these issues with her throughout her time in politics. She is now Head of Communications, for Global Diversity and Inclusion and Environment and Social Governance at TD Bank.

Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia - Senior Director, Digital Economy, Technology & Innovation, Canadian Chamber of Commerce



With a global career spanning six countries and five continents, Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia is a multilingual, award-winning innovator, entrepreneur and technology business executive with over 20 years of experience in the private, public, non-profit and academic sectors.

In her current role as Senior Director, Digital Economy, Technology & Innovation with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Ulrike leads federal policy files on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, telecommunications, digital transformation, and privacy and data protection.

Ulrike is the architect of and Policy Lead for the Canadian Chamber's Cyber. Right. Now. Council, and Future of AI Council. Ulrike also established the Canadian Chamber's health innovation, life sciences, and biomanufacturing portfolio, and the national Health Innovation and Digital Economy

Committees. Ulrike heads up multiple national initiatives, supported by a broad range of well over 150 organizations of all sizes and sectors from across Canada.

Ulrike is a member of the Council of Canadian Academies (CCA) Expert Panel on the State of Science, Technology & Innovation in Canada and the Governor General's Innovation Awards (GGIA) Assessment Committee.

Originally from Germany, Ulrike completed her M.A. in the United States and has worked in executive leadership roles at the headquarters of prominent technology MNCs, SMEs, and start-ups all around the world.

Prior to joining the Canadian Chamber, Ulrike re-established and led Digital Nova Scotia for over seven years in her role as President and CEO.

Ulrike was recognized for her technology and business leadership and her dedication to careers in STEAM, as follows: the WXN Top 100 Most Powerful in Canada Hall of Fame, RBC Top 25 Canadian Immigrant, Atlantic Business Magazine Top 50 CEO, WCT Top 15 Leadership Excellence in Canada: Innovator, and Progress Women of Excellence: Innovator/Entrepreneur. Ulrike was highlighted as one of Canada's Top 40 Change-Makers by Canadian Living Magazine, featured in the Executive Voice Publishing "Best of Canada 150 Anniversary Report" and in 2017 was one of the "Canada 150 Women" best-selling publication of the same name.

Ulrike is married with a son and daughter and moved to Canada from Israel in 2002. Ulrike has called Canada her home ever since and as a self-described nature nerd can be found in the great outdoors pretty much every day.

George Soule, Communications and Government Relations Strategist



After joining former NDP Leader Jack Layton's media relations team in 2009, George became a key advisor and spokesperson for Layton and each of the subsequent federal New Democrat leaders.

For two years, George also served as Chief of Staff to the Official Opposition in Saskatchewan. As Director of Digital Strategy and advisor to former Alberta Premier Rachel Notley, he built and managed a digital team and strategy that saw Notley's online following and engagement grow to the largest of any of Canada's premiers at the time.

George continues to advise leaders in the private sector and elected representatives at all levels of government. He maintains strong relationships with journalists across the country and contributes commentary to national and provincial media outlets.

Valérie Gervais, Founder & CEO, RKESTRA Communications



Valérie Gervais is a strategic communications professional with 20+ years of leadership experience in communications, issues management, and public affairs.

A Franco-Ontarian by heritage and fully bilingual, she has led high-profile campaigns in public affairs, stakeholder engagement, workforce adjustments, and media relations.

With experience at Rideau Hall, the House of Commons, and the Ottawa Hospital, Valérie has advised leaders in high-stakes environments and high-profile clients in the private, public, and non-profit sectors as a consultant.

She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Ottawa and continues to call Ottawa home.

Franca Palazzo, Executive Director, The Canadian Internet Society



Franca Palazzo brings over 20 years of experience in business and program development, driving brand success through tailored strategies.

As Executive Director of The Canadian Internet Society (TCIS), she oversees partnerships, sponsorships, events, membership growth, communications, and research and policy initiatives. Previously, Franca served as Partnership and Engagement Lead for CAPAM, Program Manager for the Institute on Governance, and Vice President of Business Relations for a Toronto arbitration center. She has also consulted for the legal and medical sectors, fostering key professional connections.

Franca holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from McMaster University.