





# Meet the Halifax Connector Team



**AJ Simmonds**  
*Program Coordinator*

AJ recently graduated from Acadia University where he received a degree in sociology. He is from North Preston, grew up in Dartmouth, and believes his upbringing is the reason for his passion for helping others and having a positive impact on his community.

**Nada Halaweh**  
*Program Coordinator*

Originally from Palestine, Nada was born in Kuwait and grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina and Chicago, Illinois. She moved to Halifax in 2014 to pursue a Bachelor of Public Relations at Mount Saint Vincent University. Nada has a passion for traveling, food and building relationships.

**Luz Lima-Upham**  
*Program Coordinator*

From the east coast of Mexico to the east coast of Canada as an international student, Luz found her calling in talent attraction and retention while working in the public sector in New Brunswick. She is passionate about helping newcomers succeed in their new communities.

**Robyn Webb**  
*Director of Labour Market Development*

Robyn leads the Partnership's talent attraction and retention initiatives, including the **Halifax Connector Program**, the National Connector Program, the Experiential Learning Initiative, and the Partnership's support of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot. She has an extensive background in promoting Nova Scotia as the best choice for companies looking to expand into Canada.

**Nathan Laird**  
*Program Manager*

Nathan oversees day-to-day operations of the Connector Program. Having spent over a decade with Fortune 500 firms, including managing a recruiting firm, Nathan understands the job search process from both sides of the table and enjoys sharing that knowledge with participants in the **Connector Program**.

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# Messages from...

## Halifax Partnership

It's my pleasure to present the 2018-19 Annual Report for the Halifax Connector Program, a core talent retention program of the Halifax Partnership.

The Partnership is Halifax's public-private economic development organization. We drive and accelerate economic growth by selling and marketing Halifax to the world, helping businesses reach their full potential, and tracking Halifax's economic progress.

Halifax's Economic Growth Plan for 2016-21 has set an ambitious vision for long-term economic growth. By 2031, we aim to grow Halifax's population to 550,000 and its GDP to \$30 billion. One way we will achieve this vision is by attracting and retaining our city's bright and emerging talent. Since 2009, the Halifax Connector Program has been taking action by helping these individuals connect to business and community leaders in their field to help build their professional networks and tap into the hidden job market.

The Connector Program supports companies with labour needs by connecting them to pre-qualified talent. The program focuses on industries where there are labour gaps and creates opportunities to connect established professionals with immigrants and recent professionals based on industry, skill sets, and experience.

In 2018-19, the Halifax Connector Program experienced record results that contribute to progress toward Halifax's Economic Growth Plan goals. See page 6 to learn more. We are very proud of these results and looking forward to continuing our success in 2019-20.

Thank you to our presenting sponsor RBC Future Launch and our funder the Province of Nova Scotia. Their generous ongoing support allows us to continue to strive for excellence, bridge labour market gaps, and ultimately contribute to the growth and prosperity of our city.

**Robyn Webb**  
Director, Labour Market  
Development  
Halifax Partnership



## RBC Future Launch Presenting Sponsor

Young people are Canada's future talent and the future leaders. Prosperity for all Canadians is directly linked to our ability to prepare them to succeed in a fast-changing global economy.

At RBC, we are guided by our purpose of helping clients thrive and communities prosper. We believe that by helping young people unlock their potential and launch their careers, we can assist them with building a stronger future for themselves and a more prosperous Canada for us all.

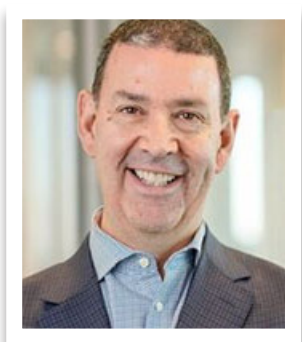
Through RBC Future Launch, our biggest ever commitment to youth in Canada, we're helping identify solutions to the unique challenges facing young people in their search for meaningful work. Our goal is to ensure that Canadian youth are more confident, better prepared and better equipped for the future of work.

We are actively working with educational institutions and partners in the private and public sectors on events and programs like the Halifax Partnership's Connector Program to co-create and provide access to long-term solutions to address these gaps.

It's an investment in our collective future—one which is meaningfully supporting future leaders to successfully transition to post-secondary education, training, or employment.

Congratulations on a successful year!

**Chris Ronald**  
Regional President,  
Atlantic Provinces  
RBC



## Premier of Nova Scotia

On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, I would like to congratulate the Halifax Partnership on another successful year of the Connector Program.

Our province is home to some of the best and brightest young talent in the country. We know new grads and new Nova Scotians in our communities have the skills and determination to succeed here. The Connector Program is a great way to attract and retain the fresh and innovative talent our province is known for. We applaud the Halifax Partnership for their hard work and determination in delivering such a valuable program—one our government is proud to support.

Their continued success has made way to Connector+, an innovative and welcomed addition to the original challenge. Young people—and their fresh way of thinking—are Nova Scotia's best resource. By using technology in new ways, we're expanding their learning opportunities and creating an environment for them to tap into the networks of our experienced business leaders, for them to grow ideas, build careers and contribute to a vibrant and dynamic province.

I know the Connector Program will continue to help new grads discover their potential and create opportunities for them to establish roots in our communities.

**Honourable Stephen McNeil, M.L.A.**  
Premier of Nova Scotia



## Mayor of Halifax

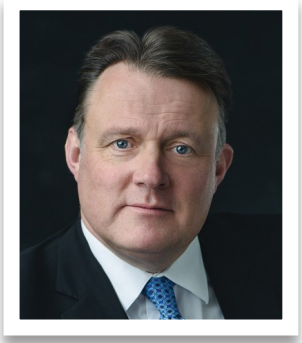
One need not look far in Halifax to find someone who has benefitted from the Halifax Partnership's Connector Program. They might be that enthusiastic young person at work or the new Canadian who shares the ferry commute every morning.

Year over year, the Connector Program helps growing numbers of new graduates and Canadian newcomers build their professional networks to find meaningful careers. While the concept is simple, with volunteer Connectors serving to introduce pre-qualified program participants to people in their network, the outcomes are profound. Through the power of good will and human connection, talent is meeting opportunity in Halifax and a host of other jurisdictions that have adopted the program.

The Connector Program not only helps advance our ambitious goals to grow our population and increase our GDP, it sends an important message about our values as a community that welcomes diversity and believes new graduates deserve to put their talent to work. Population statistics show that Halifax is indeed attracting and retaining thousands more people from around the world and becoming a city of opportunity for young people.

Congratulations to everyone at the Partnership who have played a role in creating and expanding this wonderful program, and thank you to all who have devoted their time to helping participants forge valuable ties that will help them get established in Halifax. I look forward to the continued success of the Connector Program.

**Mayor Mike Savage**  
Halifax Regional  
Municipality



*In 2018-19, the Halifax Connector Program experienced record numbers for new Connectors, new Connectees, and jobs found.*



# How it Works

The Halifax Connector Program is a simple yet highly effective networking program that connects local business and community members (**Connectors**) with immigrants and local and international graduates (**Connectees**) looking to build their professional network. There are three steps: Match, Connect, Refer.

## Match

Connector Program staff meet with Connectees to discuss their backgrounds and career ambitions to ensure they're "job ready". They match each Connectee with a Connector based on industry experience and professional backgrounds. Once the connection has been made, the Connector and the Connectee set up a meeting.

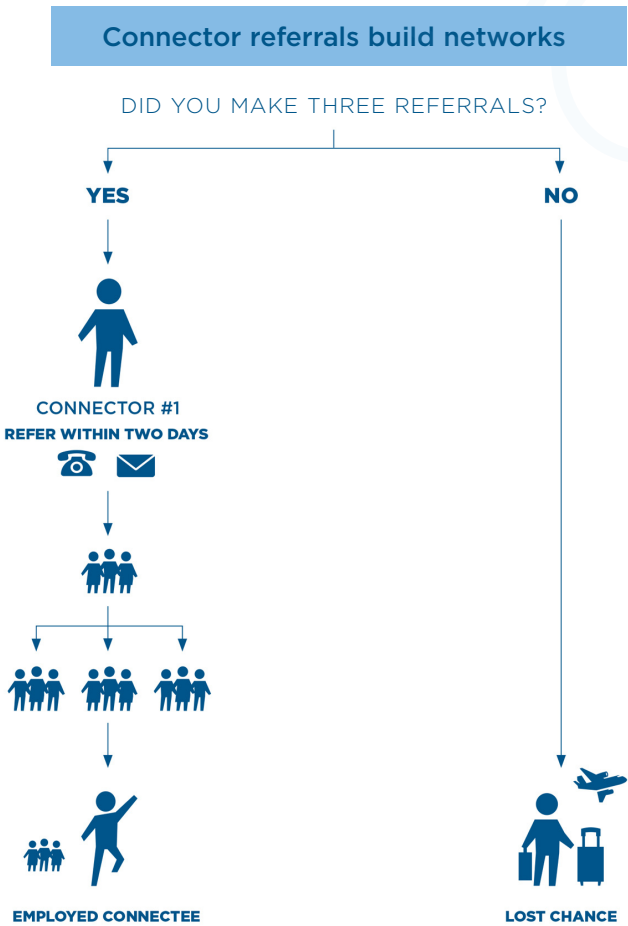
## Connect

The Connector and Connectee meet for 30 minutes in the Connector's workplace or a coffee shop to discuss industry details, skills and areas of expertise, related news, current market demands and hidden job opportunities in Halifax.

## Refer

Connectors then refer the Connectee to a minimum of three people in their network. These referrals may be potential employers, influential leaders within their industry or others who may benefit from meeting with a skilled professional.

Through these introductions, Connectees rapidly build their professional network and gain insight into the local labour market, which increases their likelihood of finding jobs and staying in Halifax. Connectors enjoy the experience of giving back to the community and making an impact on people's lives, while the organizations they work for benefit by gaining access to qualified job seekers and helping to retain talent for their industries.



# 2018-19 Goals & Objectives

**Strategic Goal:**  
Support the Economic Growth Plan five-year **Attract and Retain Talent** goal to grow Halifax's labour force to 271,000 by 2021.

- Strategic Objectives:**
- 1 Sign up 100 new Connectors
  - 2 Re-engage 50 inactive Connectors
  - 3 Sign up 400 new Connectees
  - 4 Ensure at least 150 Connectees find full-time work in their field

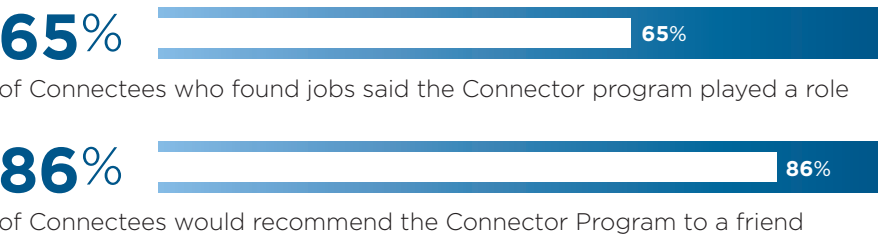
- How We Achieved Our Goals & Objectives:**
- **Expand** relationships with public and private sector organizations in high-wage high-growth key industries to understand their talent acquisition strategies and focus on matching Connectees with organizations interested in their skill set.
  - **Strengthen** relationships with community and referral partners, avoiding duplication of efforts and providing optimal results for all participants.
  - **Continue** to use face-to-face meetings, networking events, and career workshops to facilitate connections.



# 2018-19 Results

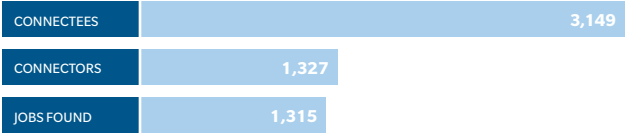
The Halifax Connector Program’s work is aligned to the **Attract and Retain Talent** goal and targets set out in the Economic Growth Plan. We are on track and excited about the results.

## Connector Client Satisfaction Survey Results (April 1, 2018 – Dec 31, 2018)

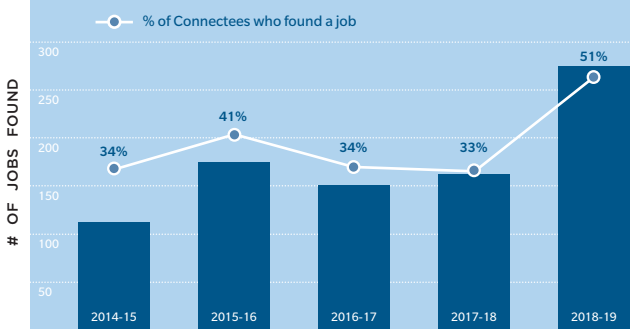


Objectives	Baseline	2018	Progress
Grow Halifax’s labour force to 271,000 <small>Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey</small>	239,100	249,000	Progressing
Increase Halifax’s overall labour force growth <small>Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey</small>	0.5%	3.3%	Improving
Increase net interprovincial migration of youth ages 20-29 to Nova Scotia <small>Source: Statistics Canada, Annual Demographic Estimates</small>	-1,300	152	Improving
Grow the international student body... <small>Source: Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission</small>	5,832	6,742	Improving
...and the gross share that transition into permanent residency <small>Source: Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission</small>	3.4%	12.6%	Improving
Increase net international immigration to Halifax <small>Source: Statistics Canada, Annual Demographic Estimates</small>	2,097	5,405	Improving

## 2009-19 Connector Program Cumulative Totals



## Jobs Found by Connectees 2014-2019



## Activity Highlights

The activities below highlight some of the work we do to ensure we meet our goals above and beyond directly connecting Connectees and Connectors.

### Engagement with Connectors and Employers

- Referred Connectees to 30 companies, including RBC, IBM, Narrative Research, REDspace, Shaw Group, MKIT, GoSecure, Efficiency Nova Scotia, ADP, MUFG Investor Group, and Nova Communications. A number of Connectees secured interviews and jobs as a result.
- Engaged more than 40 Connectors from the program’s presenting sponsor, RBC.
- Profiled nine “Super Connectors” who met with four or more Connectees each year in a social media campaign.

### Engagement with Connectees

- Hosted information booths at six career fairs as opportunities to promote the Connector Program to upcoming post-secondary graduates.
- Delivered 20 presentations to NSCC, Dalhousie University, Saint Mary’s University, NSCAD and Mount Saint Vincent University students teaching skills such as in-person and digital networking, personal brand, and job search strategies. The Connector team is frequently invited to present by career services team, academic departments and professors.

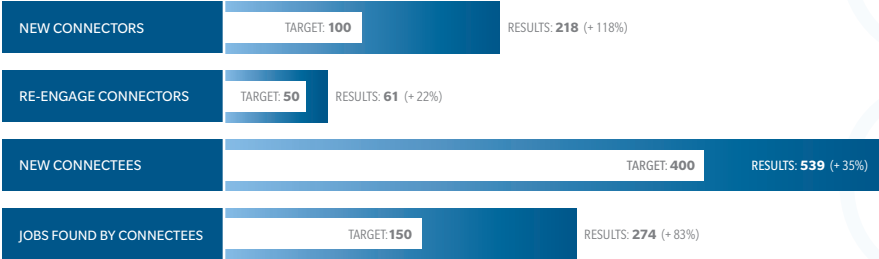
### Collaboration with Partners

- Partnered with Gerald Walsh & Associates to deliver four workshops to 60-80 immigrants and recent international graduates on Canadian standards in job searching, resumes, and interviewing.
- Participated on the planning committee of the 2019 BEST (Branding Employment & Successful Transitions) Conference for international students. The conference was organized by local post-secondary institutions and attracted 300 students from across Nova Scotia.

The Connector team presented a workshop on LinkedIn and branding.

- Worked to expand visibility in the African Nova Scotian (ANS) community. Presented to the management team of the Black Business Initiative in April 2018. Outreach has resulted in 14 new Connectors from the ANS community.
- Hosted two networking events with the Canadian International Council for 65 participants
- Sponsored, promoted and attended Fusion Halifax’s “Networking at Night” event targeted at young professionals
- Partnered with Magnified Public Relations to host “The Connect” networking event in February 2019, which was attended by 70 people.
- Maintained long-standing relationship with Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) to continue to provide top quality support for the nearly half of the Connector Program’s annual Connectees who are recent immigrants to Halifax. Worked with ISANS’ employment counsellors to welcome new Connectees.

## 2018-19 Connector Program Targets and Results





# Celebrating Our Connectors

In January 2019, the Connector Program held its annual Connector Appreciation Event at the Halifax Distilling Company to celebrate our Connectors and recognize their critical contribution to the program.

This year's event was attended by 75 Connectors and featured networking, trivia, and a performance by local rock musician Adam Baldwin.

The Connector Program thanks its 1,000+ Connectors for welcoming and supporting immigrants and recent graduates, helping them to be successful in Halifax.



# Leveraging the Halifax Connector Program

In addition to the Halifax Connector Program, the Partnership leverages its public and private sector investment and other labour market initiatives to retain recent graduates and immigrants in Halifax and Nova Scotia.

Here are some of the incremental benefits the Halifax Connector Program received through these initiatives in 2018-19.

### Game Changers Action Plan

In 2015, the Halifax Partnership launched the Game Changers Youth Retention Action Plan. This ambitious plan aimed to reduce the net annual outmigration of youth (aged 20-29) in Nova Scotia to zero.

Through Game Changers, we inspired and supported businesses to:

- Hire young professionals
- Offer experiential learning opportunities
- Become a Connector

The net annual outmigration of youth increased from almost -1,500 in 2014-15 to +252 in 2016-17 and +152 in 2017-18. This is the first time in over 30 years that more young people in this age category have moved to Nova Scotia than have left for other provinces.

At the Game Changers Awards Gala on October 17, 2018, with over 250 people in attendance, the Halifax Connector Program presented the following Connector Awards:

- Best Super Connector Awards:  
**Nick Misener**, Venor Group  
**Kent Lane**, CBCL Limited
- Best Connector Organization Award:  
**NATIONAL Public Relations**

On March 26, the Connector team supported the Partnership's #HireMeHalifax networking event and pitch competition. Recent and soon-to-be graduates submitted their best elevator pitch videos, telling Halifax employers why they should be hired. The top 10 finalists pitched live at the event, and a panel of business leaders, including Connector Program Coordinator Nada Halaweh, selected three winners.

More than 200 students, recent graduates, and employers attended the event, and were given the opportunity to meet and network.

### National Connector Program

The National Connector Program, funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), assists Canadian communities in launching Connector Programs in their own regions. This program positions Halifax and Nova Scotia as global innovative leaders in the area of immigrant and youth attraction and retention.

The Halifax Partnership hosted a two-day National Connector Learning Exchange in October 2018, which brought together 14 Connector communities from across Canada to discuss opportunities and best practices. The Halifax Connector team shared their knowledge and presented a session on best practices for partnering with businesses.

### Atlantic Immigration Pilot

The Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP) provides employers with a more efficient process to hire foreign workers and international graduates. Working with the Halifax Connector Program, international students from local universities can be hired following graduation, allowing employers to demonstrate their commitment in supporting the students' permanent residency status. There is strong collaboration between the Partnership's AIP Account Executives and Connector team to connect businesses to international graduates and immigrants.



Tara Wickwire, Associate Vice President at NATIONAL Public Relations, accepting the company's Game Changers award for **Best Connector Organization**



# Partnerships & Collaborations

**Thank you to our partners** for their contribution to the Halifax Connector Program in 2018-19:

- Atlantic Canada Aerospace & Defence Association (ACADA)
- Atlantic Corporate Volunteer Council
- Black Business Initiative Society (BBI)
- Canada Green Building Council - Atlantic
- Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 (Welcome Home to Canada Program)
- Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDÉNÉ)
- Dalhousie University
- David Aplin Group
- Digital Nova Scotia
- EduNova
- Fusion Halifax
- Gerald Walsh & Associates
- Halifax Chamber of Commerce
- Halifax Distilling Co.
- Halifax Immigration Partnership
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- HR Pros
- Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)
- Innovacorp
- Irving Shipyard
- Job Junction
- Magnified Public Relations
- Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre
- Mount Saint Vincent University
- Nova Scotia Business Inc.
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Nova Scotia Office of Immigration
- NS Works
- NSCAD
- Project Management Institute - Nova Scotia Chapter
- RBC
- Saint Mary's University
- TD
- The Canadian International Council (CIC) - Atlantic Chapter
- Volta Labs
- YMCA

*Our strategic goal is to support the Economic Growth Plan five-year Attract and Retain Talent goal to grow Halifax's labour force to 271,000 by 2021.*

# Best Practices

The Halifax Partnership continually monitors and reviews the Halifax Connector Program's performance metrics and consistently seeks to improve the program. Here is an overview of best practices learned in 2018-19.

- Efficiently and strategically sending vetted Connectee resumes to interested employers has been key to the success rate of jobs found.
- Developing a strong following on social media, particularly on LinkedIn, provides further opportunities to share job postings, event updates and labour market information. It also significantly increases word-of-mouth promotion of the Connector Program.
- Developing a new referral channel with Irving Shipyard has allowed the Connector Program to support Irving's recruitment efforts.
- Exchanging best practices with National Connector communities at the Learning Exchange benefits all Connector communities and strengthens talent retention in Canada.
- Celebrating Connectors' contributions and passion for the program through recognition and networking events and social media increases engagement and recruitment of volunteer Connectors.



# Looking Forward

With continued funding support from the Province of Nova Scotia and with the investment of our presenting sponsor RBC Future Launch, the Halifax Connector Program will continue to connect immigrants and local and international graduates with opportunities to settle in Halifax, enrich the talent pool in our city, and play a key role in maintaining and enhancing Halifax’s reputation as a welcoming city and a destination of choice for talent.



- In 2019-20 we look forward to implementing our annual plan with greater emphasis on the following:
- Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Connector Program.
  - Expanding the Connector Organization program to welcome new partners who share the vision of the Connector Program.
  - Expanding the number of industry-specific job search events offered for Connectees. In addition to events with Gerald Walsh & Associates, the team will host four engineering and several IT job search workshops.
  - Utilizing technology to enhance communications with Connectors and improve engagement.
  - Engaging more Connectors from diverse industries and backgrounds to better improve the Connectee experience.
  - Expanding relationships with local post-secondary institutions by supporting their initiatives and presenting to students to raise awareness of the Halifax Connector Program.
  - Launching a Halifax Connector Program designated LinkedIn page to broadcast program news, upcoming events, job postings, and industry news.
  - Conducting speed interviews and networking events with targeted partners and investors.
  - Leveraging the Partnership’s other labour market and business growth programs and initiatives.

*“I am a Connector because it is my passion to connect people.”*

# Testimonials

“The [Connector] Program has been a great source of motivation and inspiration in my journey. They kept me driven and encouraged me in looking for employers which suited my profile. Halifax Partnership is a great source of opportunities for new immigrants, for connecting them to the right job prospect and employers which suits their best interest and experiences.”

- M. Siddiqui (Connectee)

“Being a Connector is a simple ask. I meet with great people who want to build their lives here in Halifax and try to point them in the right direction. More often than not, I learn just as much, if not more, from them.”

- N. Misener (Connector)

“I want to personally thank you and the Halifax Connector program for your help. It was thanks to you that I was able to get this awesome opportunity in my field, which before joining the program seemed something impossible given how niche my skill set is.”

- J. Perez (Connectee)

“I am a Connector because it is my passion to connect people. Connecting people with jobs, networks or information that can somehow assist them as they move forward in a new country, a new city or new phase of their life is incredibly rewarding! If I can do anything to help even one person grow their network, get connected with a job opportunity or advance themselves in some way then the effort is 100% worth it.”

- M. Mullock (Connector)



# Thank You

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**HALIFAX  
PARTNERSHIP**  
CONNECTOR PROGRAM

For more information on the  
Halifax Connector Program, or to  
become a Connector, please visit:  
[HalifaxPartnership.com](http://HalifaxPartnership.com)

Or email **Nathan Laird**,  
Program Manager at:  
[nlaird@halifaxpartnership.com](mailto:nlaird@halifaxpartnership.com)

## *Super Connectors*

Donick Abad	Chris Hornberger
Krista Martin	Chris O'Shea
Mervin Quinlan	Sara Napier
Shelagh McCorry	Pat D'Entremont

