

A hand holding a yellow ribbon against a sunset background. The hand is positioned in the center-right of the frame, with the fingers spread and the ribbon looped around the index and middle fingers. The background is a soft, out-of-focus sunset with warm orange and yellow tones. The hand is wearing a white sweater with brown and black stripes at the cuff.

# What We're Remembering to Forget

(and learning in the process)

Impact 2018



Looking back at 2018, we recognized the adverse effects traditional assumptions were having on how we conducted our work. We focused on unpacking narratives that were getting in our way and rethinking ways of being and doing that aren't serving us in our mission.

We use the image of a ribbon to illustrate the process of unraveling our memories, forgetting the notions that hinder us and recalling what we've learned in the process.

Our Lessons Learned are woven into our experiences; they thread together the story of how we create impact. We hope you will find they have universal application.

Follow the thread as we remember to forget.



# Before we forget...

...we must remember our relationship to the land—past, present, and future.

We must acknowledge the history of this traditional territory, and honour the longstanding relationships of the three local First Nation groups of this land. The Attawandaran (Neutral) peoples once settled this region alongside the Algonquin and Haudenosaunee peoples, and used this land as their traditional hunting grounds. The three longstanding Indigenous groups of this geographical region are: The Anishinaabe, The Haudenosaunee and the Leni-Lunaape Peoples.

We must recognize the three First Nations communities neighbouring the City of London: Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames and Munsee-Delaware Nation.

We must remember that this land is not owned, but lent to us to nurture and sustain for those who come after.



# Progress is transactional

*transformational*

Measurements—metrics, values, and quantities—have long been the currency of success.

But there is immeasurable value in the transformative work of creating and strengthening relationships and analyzing systems that restrict us to transactional 'easy' work.

Progress should not be merely quantified.

When evaluating progress, we must also examine the quality of human relationships, the depth of empathy, and the capacity to break down barriers to improve access for all.





Photo: Change the World Youth Action Team

# Key Story: 40 Hours Initiative

In May 2018, 80% of Grade 12 students at a London secondary school had not reported or not completed 40 hours of volunteer service required to graduate. Educators wondered what was getting in the way.

Pillar's Change the World Action Team provided individualized supports for students working to complete their hours. The team focuses on making volunteer opportunities more available, and making the work more meaningful.

This initiative addresses barriers associated with volunteerism, such as having to work or take care of family members rather than volunteer. Changing the conversation around volunteering allowed for increased awareness of barriers and more meaningful engagement.

Rather than valuing the number of hours completed, we have learned to focus on adding value to student experiences to make volunteering more accessible and meaningful.



**Kayley MacGregor**  
Youth Engagement Coordinator





# Pausing is failure

## *maturation*

It can be difficult, and even frowned upon, to pause or slow down in accelerated and advanced environments.

But to pause is not to stop working; it is about taking time to channel one's work and focus inward.

An organization is strengthened when allowed to reflect and evolve. Dedicating energy toward going deeper and wider, grants space for the maturation of services and processes.

# Key Story: Membership Redesign

Maintaining connection was a serious focus in 2018. Our team and programs have grown rapidly, and we wanted to ensure nonprofits continued to feel they are at the root of our work at Pillar.

By taking the time to pause and reflect, it made room for us to think critically about creating a network mindset. We wanted to expand our cross-sectoral collaboration and to create a network grounded in support.

We are excited that Pillar Nonprofit Network Membership is now open to individuals, organizations and enterprises invested in positive community impact.

Focusing on creating a network mindset with intentionality makes a unified community possible. In pausing and prioritizing internal development, we strengthen the foundations of our work and community which will support our future endeavours.



We re-evaluated the way we were approaching our work in order to cultivate a network where everyone could lean on one another and benefit from these connections.

**Mitra Cameron & Sienna Jae Taylor**  
Membership Redesign Team





# Saying 'no' is obstructive *supportive*

In a world, and work culture, that values innovation and growth the word 'no' has become almost taboo.

Turning down an opportunity or request can be viewed as a hindrance to progress and cooperation. Yet, counterintuitively, saying 'no' is one of the best ways to provide support.

A rejection can help advance an idea in unexpected ways. And being forthright about concerns and constraints can prevent subsequent disappointment.



# TEAM ALLIANCE

To thrive as a team we agree to:

## GENUINE AND ACTIVE APPRECIATION

Use genuine and active appreciation with each other - learn each other's Appreciation Languages, be aware of different needs, use diversity of methods.

## CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Celebrate success in formal and informal ways (birthdays, achieving milestones, savouring accomplishments).



## SPEND TIME TOGETHER

Spend time together intentionally (community volunteering, reflective time, discovery walks).



## BE PRESENT FOR EACH OTHER

Listen deeply, be curious, take time to understand the perspective and experience of each other.



## GET REAL

Engage in get real conversations - be honest, non judgemental, check out assumptions, say what you need to say, actively listen, follow up so nothing is left hanging.

## SELF CARE

Create an environment that supports self care.



# Key Story: Decision Making Tool & Team Alliance

As a team, we have committed to building core competencies around empathy.

Our Decision Making Tool and Team Alliance manifest our values and help us establish a brave space for failure and learning.

These tools help us navigate critical conversations and communicate with clarity.

Saying 'no' becomes an acceptable, even respected, response when we know a denial is made with our best interests at heart.

Having an articulated team alliance shapes how we work together... the way we work together is just as important as the work that we do.



**Caitlin Villeneuve**  
Interim Education and Events Manager



**PILLAR**  
nonprofit network

# Storytelling is a pastime

*responsibility, that takes time*

Storytelling is an ancient knowledge-sharing practice that reveals truths through content and through presentation.

The power of storytelling for its ability to teach, inspire, and spark change is often underestimated—as is its potential for harm.

When we provide platforms to storytellers to harness the capabilities that narratives hold, we must do so in a responsible manner, with knowledge-keepers at the center.

When handled thoughtfully, storytelling can illuminate new paths and create sustained impact.



# Key Story: Responsible Storytelling

Storytelling is a practice as old as time. However, in the context of building community we can often overlook the complexities involved in holding and sharing stories that don't necessarily belong to us.

Inviting individuals to share their stories raises important questions like:

Who else will be affected by this story?

In what context should this story be shared?

Are we doing harm by sharing this story?

How are we influencing the way the story is being told?

We commit to slowing down and reflecting on the stories we share and are shared with us, and to honouring their core meaning.



These questions will continue to guide us in our work and in key programs, like the Pillar Community Innovation Awards.

**Maria Luisa Contursi**  
Director of Impact and Storytelling



# Trust is earned

*co-created*

True collaboration requires trust to be successful.

This trust is not only earned, but is co-created—by navigating messy conversations, balancing the interests of all parties, and creating a shared identity that places people at the center.

Through these actions, an alliance is shaped jointly.

It is from collaborations based on this kind of trust that exciting and unexpected outcomes emerge.





# Key Story: VERGE Capital

VERGE Capital developed out of a collaboration between several local partners, spanning provincial sectors and housed within a national social finance ecosystem.

Cultivating these relationships, with all the complexities of co-ownership and co-branding, requires the mindful navigation of diverse perspectives and priorities. The success of this program rests on a foundation of trust built between local partners.

One approach to trust-building that Pillar staff use is Empathy Walks:

Two people walk as a pair for 30 minutes, with each person spending 15 minutes to share their upbringing, three life-altering experiences, and their emerging future.

The act of walking side-by-side eases formalities and limited eye contact relaxes inhibitions, inviting candor. Simultaneously, the practice of deep listening encourages empathy and connection. As a result, mutual trust is organically co-created.

There is a vulnerability with sharing power and responsibility, and trust is the key to exploring that collaboration to its fullest.

”

**Albert Brulé**  
Director, Resource & Business Development





# Inclusion means everyone

*is not always about us*

Despite widespread support across the organization, we face challenges in honouring our pledge to address and remove barriers to equity and inclusion.

We struggled to reconcile the assumption that a network resource bears the responsibility of leading conversations about inclusion with the belief that doing so would position us as gatekeepers—a decidedly exclusive practice.

We now recognize that upholding inclusive practices will sometimes dictate that we step aside in order to be led by others.

Change begins with listening. By assuming the role of learner and reflective listener, we hope to foster environments and conversations that deliver deeper impact.





# Key Story: Be Inclusive Series

Our 'Be Inclusive' Series sparked a crucial learning moment regarding our role in promoting inclusion within our network.

We operated under the assumption that we needed to drive conversations around inclusivity if we wished to serve as allies. This series opened us to feedback from our community that articulated the role they needed us to play.

We were called upon to privilege the expertise and leadership of advocates and voices of lived-experience, lending only logistical and promotional support, and facilitating connections upon request.

These modifications firmly established the individuals who shared their knowledge and stories as subject experts and teachers—only under their direction could this series deliver what the community needed.



It is not just about making the circle bigger to bring more people in, but listening to new voices and being prepared to change to make a better circle for all.

**Dharshi Lacey**

Director, Diversity and Governance



# Remember to forget...

- Progress is ~~transactional~~  
*transformational*
- Pausing is ~~failure~~  
*maturation*
- Saying 'no' is ~~obstructive~~  
*supportive*
- Storytelling is a ~~pastime~~  
*responsibility, that takes time*
- Trust is ~~earned~~  
*co-created*
- Inclusion ~~means everyone~~  
*is not all about us*





# OUR IMPACT 2018



## SPARKING COLLABORATION



**502** Pillar Nonprofit Members across all three sectors

**410** individuals working at Innovation Works

**43** DECA (Desk Exchange Community Animator) Volunteers, contributing **4403.5** volunteer hours

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING



**70**

workshops held

with...



**3117** attendees

# SHARING STORIES



## CONNECTED COMMUNITY





## BOARD GOVERNANCE

Pillar helps nonprofit boards find qualified candidates from under-represented communities to sit at their leadership tables.

We helped match

**23**

candidates on

**15**

boards.



**13**

of these candidates were sponsored by the London Life Young Leaders Program that Pillar offered in partnership with the London Youth Advisory Council.

## FINANCIAL RETURNS SOLVING COMMUNITY ISSUES



**\$2.26  
MILLION**

raised through  
the VERGE  
Breakthrough fund



**4** **IMPACT  
INVESTMENTS**  
in VERGE startup fund

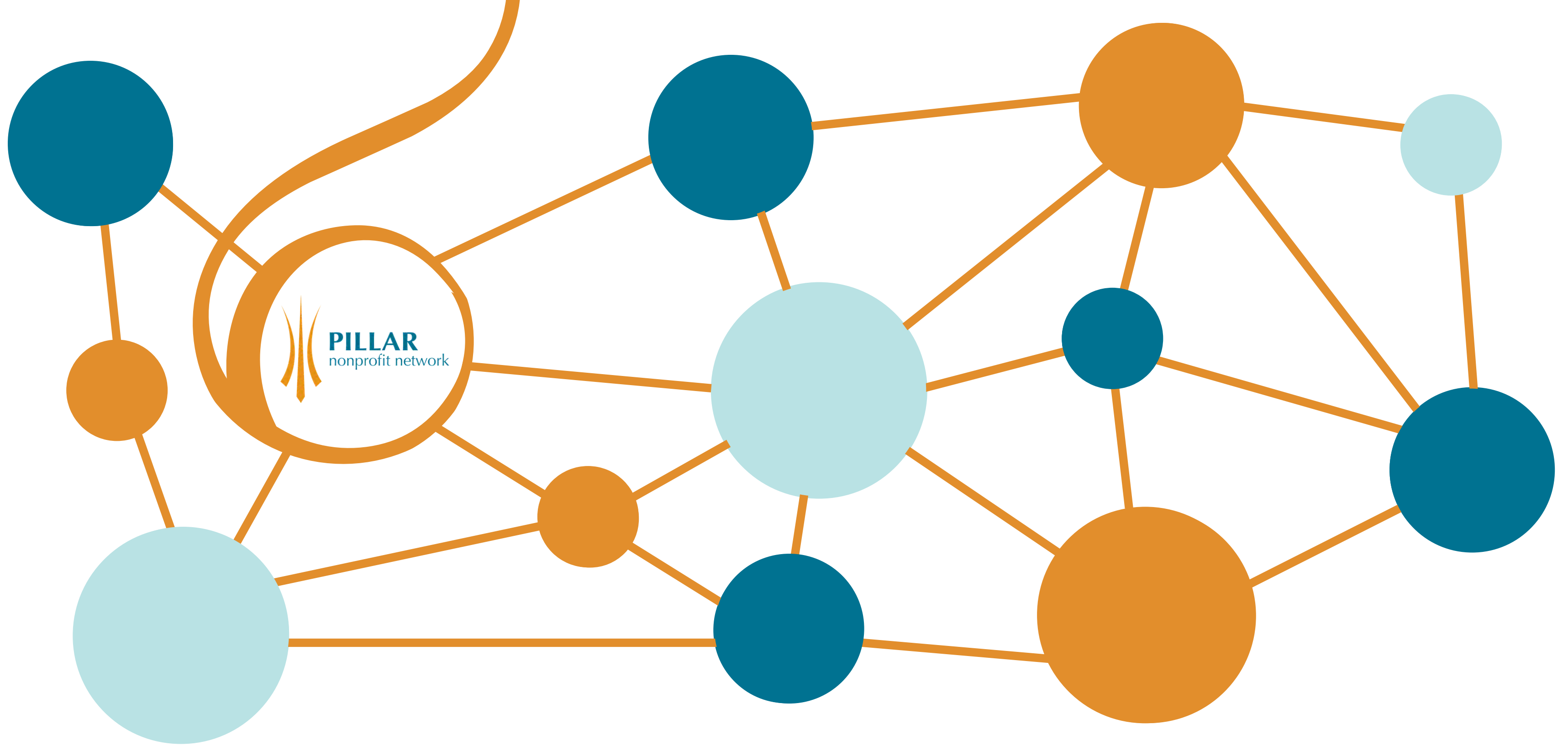


**25**

Libro Social Enterprise  
Incubator participants



Through our Social Enterprise Southwest ecosystem project we have supported **over 200 social enterprises and 45 organizations** connect to social enterprise and social finance network that generates economic activity while solving local social and environmental challenges.



Thank you to those who make this learning possible.

We believe that a connected network sparks collaboration and a willingness to lean on and learn from each other to help build an engaged, inclusive, and vibrant community.



# Pillar Supporters

- ✧ City of London
- ✧ Fanshawe College Centre for Research and Innovation
- ✧ Ignite NPS Foundation
- ✧ Ivey School of Business
- ✧ The Lawson Foundation
- ✧ Libro Credit Union
- ✧ London Community Foundation
- ✧ London Life
- ✧ Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration
- ✧ Ministry of Economic Development & Growth
- ✧ Ontario Trillium Foundation
- ✧ Sisters of St. Joseph
- ✧ United Way Elgin Middlesex
- ✧ Western Continuing Studies
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## Platinum Sponsor:

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## Award Sponsors:

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- ▷ London Life
- ▷ London Convention Centre
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# Innovation Works Donors:

## Visionary

(\$250,000 or more)

- ✧ Anonymous
- ✧ Ontario Trillium Foundation
- ✧ Ursuline Sisters of the Chatham Union

## Innovator

(\$150,000 to \$249,999)

- ✧ Enabling Accessibility Fund – Government of Canada
- ✧ London Life
- ✧ The Lawson Foundation

## Game Changer

(\$50,000 to \$149,999)

- ✧ Anne Bergeron
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(\$2,500 To \$4,999)

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- ✧ SVX

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