

EMBARGOED until 8:00pm EST, December 8th, 2016

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Samara Canada honours three women with the 2016 Everyday Political Citizen award

Toronto, December 8, 2016— With 2016 drawing to a close, many Canadians are eager to put a year marked by fear, intolerance and doubts about democracy behind them. With a new year and fresh start in sight, Samara Canada is thrilled to share a story about positive politics and offer hope for our democracy's future. Today, Samara is announcing the **2016 Everyday Political Citizen** award winners. Meet the three extraordinary young women who inspire optimism and confidence in our next generation of public leaders.

Since June, Samara, a non-partisan charity and champion of increased civic engagement, received 240 nominations from across the country for the fourth annual Everyday Political Citizen contest, which celebrates that many ways in which unelected Canadians engage with politics.

From the list of 240, a jury of 21 notable Canadians, including Margaret Atwood, Rick Mercer, author Carmen Aguirre and NHL defenseman Andrew Ference, picked a shortlist of 19 Canadians of all political stripes and passions. Today, the jury has voted on winners in each of the three age categories. **Ottawa's** legal advocate **Naomi Sayers** (age 30+ category), **Nunavut's** climate change educator **Ruth Kaviok** (age 18-29 category) and **Winnipeg's** community mobilizer **Kakeka Thundersky** (under 18 category).

(This [link](#) will feature the three winners as of December 8th at 8:00 pm.)

Naomi Sayers (age 30+ category) of **Ottawa, ON** is a law school student and legal advocate for Indigenous women. She regularly writes at www.kwetoday.com and has written for national and local publications. "Kwe", denoting woman in Anishinaabemowin, is a symbol for her identity as a fierce Indigenous feminist. Everyday Political Citizen juror **Andrew McIntyre** said: *"Naomi's personal story is inspiring. I have no doubt that her advocacy is empowering the many communities she is a part of by challenging stigmas and ensuring dignity for all Canadians. I believe that Naomi has much to teach Canada about becoming a more inclusive, understanding country."* With her public legal education initiative, Between the Lines, Naomi ensures her community has tools to resist injustice.

Ruth Kaviok (age 18-29 category) of **Arviat, NU** knows climate change makes the wildlife and people of Arviat vulnerable. Blending traditional Inuit knowledge with the scientific study of climate, she promotes a cross-cultural understanding of environmental issues. Her unique approach uses experiential learning and storytelling to make sustainability and environmentalism come alive to Inuit and non-Inuit communities alike. *"Ruth's contributions to her community and Indigenous youth issues reminds us to look beyond our own experiences and embrace the knowledge of those who were here before us,"* said Everyday Political Citizen juror **Barry Peters**.

Kakeka Thundersky (under 18 category) of **Winnipeg, MB** was inspired to begin volunteering in her neighbourhood after the passing of her mother, a lifelong grassroots activist, earlier this year. She is recognized for her commitment to volunteering with numerous charities in the neighbourhood and her motivation to shine a light on the good in her community. *“Out of tragedy Kakeka chose to try and improve the lives of those around her. To take action like this, to become a leader among your peers when—even at the best of times— it is so easy to retreat into your own world, is something I greatly admire,”* said **Rick Mercer**, Everyday Political Citizen juror.

The three runners-up this year are **Alethea Arnaquq-Baril** (age 30+ category) of **Iqaluit, NU** for making documentaries to tell the stories of activism in Nunavut; **Caleb Turner** (age 18-29 category) of Moose Cree First Nation for his work to improving the lives of youth in his community; and **Emma Mogus** (under 18 category) of **Oakville, ON** for delivering 150,000 books through Books with No Bounds.

Winners’ Announcement

The three winners will be announced by Rick Mercer (via video) at a ceremony on December 8th, at 7:00pm at Samara Canada’s offices in Toronto.

Interviews are available with the winners and runners-up, some jury members, as well as Samara’s Executive Director. Ruth Kaviok, Caleb Turner and Kakeka Thundersky will be available in Toronto for interviews from December 7th – 8th and Naomi Sayers and Emma Mogus on December 8th.

If you wish to request an interview or cover the ceremony, please contact Suzanne at 416-805-6744 or suzanne@redeyemedia.ca.

About the Project

Everyday Political Citizen was launched in 2013. Conducted coast-to-coast-to-coast, the project recognizes the diversity of politics and democracy in Canada, crowd-sourcing nominations for active political citizens and celebrating some of the many thousands of ordinary people engaging in big and small ways to make positive change, enriching Canada’s political culture.

“Samara’s [research](#) shows that Canada requires a culture shift towards ‘everyday democracy,’” said Jane Hilderman, Executive Director of Samara Canada. “The Everyday Political Citizens are role models for all Canadians.” Everyday Political Citizen juror Rick Mercer added: “Empowering a community to change and make change is a powerful and enduring way to strengthen our social fabric.”

We would like to thank RBC Foundation for their donation, sponsors Bennett Jones and Price Waterhouse Cooper and the in-kind support of The Tyee, iPolitics, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and Civic Action.

About Samara

Samara Canada is dedicated to reconnecting citizens to politics. Established as a charity in 2009, Samara has become Canada’s most trusted, non-partisan champion of increased civic engagement and a more positive public life. Samara’s research and educational programming shines new light on Canada’s

democratic system and encourages greater political participation across the country to build better politics and a better Canada for everyone.

We are always available to comment on our areas of research, which include citizen participation and voting behaviour, political leadership and MPs, and political parties. Our research and programming can be found at www.samaracanada.com or via Twitter @SamaraCDA.