

# Appendix B

## Active citizenship profile #1: Abhayjeet Singh Sachal

Break the Divide is a non-profit organization that has connected thousands of students in dozens of schools from countries around the world. The organization was founded by Abhay Sachal when he was just 14 years old.

When Abhay was in high school, he went on a trip with an organization called “Students On Ice”. He made friendships with youth living in the Arctic who were suffering from mental health issues.

These friends told him that melting glaciers were threatening their homes. Abhay wanted to keep his connection to these friends while also tackling climate change. He found out that in general, First Nation communities suffer while the rest of Canada thrives. He thought if other young people saw the personal effects of climate change, they would want to get involved. That was when Break the Divide was founded.

Abhay explained in a 2021 interview that, “Essentially, it allows for global pen pals. One of my ninth-grade friends told me he learned more about Canada, reconciliation and climate change from a two-hour conversation with a young Arctic student than in all his previous social studies classes. He said having a friend to share how they felt about the state of the world helped him feel less alone.”



As a practicing Sikh, Sachal believes in “seva”, which means selfless service. His goal through his civic action is to turn empathy into action. Through connections, youth can build on their shared concerns to avoid social divides and create a plan of action. Break the Divide chapters now operate in many countries around the world.

## Active citizenship profile #2: Autumn Peltier

Lake Huron is the world's largest freshwater supply. Autumn Peltier was born and raised in Wiikwemikoong Unceded Territory, Manitoulin Island, on the shores of Lake Huron. She is from the Anishinabek Nation in Canada. When she was young, she went to water ceremonies with her mother. One ceremony in Serpent River First Nation in Ontario affected her a lot. She saw signs that said the water was toxic and her mother had to explain to her that they had to boil their water to drink it. Toxic and polluted water on reserves in Canada has been an ongoing significant issue for many years. This is caused by things like pollution and pipeline leaks.

Autumn's aunt, Josephine Mandamin, was known as a "water walker" because she spent years working as the Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner before she passed away. Autumn learned a lot from her aunt and has fought for access for her people to drink clean water on reserves and for all people to have clean water around the world. In 2016, she even met the Prime Minister and criticized his government for not doing enough about clean water!

When her aunt passed away, Autumn became the new Chief Water Commissioner. She was 14 years old. She continues to bring attention to how First Nation communities are treated unequally in Canada. She has taken her fight to the United Nations on World Water Day. Her invitation to speak to the UN read, "By lending your powerful voice to this important cause, you give voice to the youth, most needy and vulnerable among us who have none."



Autumn Peltier, Chief Water Commissioner,  
The Anishinabek Nation

*Image used with permission  
Copyright Jessica Deeks*

Because of Autumn's activism, the Assembly of First Nations Youth Council created a Niabi Odacidae fund to help protect the water for future generations.

## Active citizenship profile #3: Cameron Davis

Growing up in Markham, Ontario, Cameron Davis learned at an early age there were many negative stereotypes associated with being Black. He was inspired to fight back against the stereotypes at a Black Lives Matter protest in Markham in 2020.

To Cameron, being Black means that he is forced to always think about how he's acting when wearing a hoodie or playing loud music in his neighborhood; things his white friends never have to worry about. Cameron worries that people in leadership positions in schools, cities, provinces, and regions of Canada do not take racism seriously. He uses his YouTube channel to explain what it is like growing up Black in Canada. One video called "My Teenage Life Being Black in Canada" has gained hundreds of thousands of views. In the video, Cameron says the hardest thing he faces is prejudice. He tries to use his voice to educate others about racism so that society can change.

His speech at the protest and YouTube video convinced Cameron that his voice is important. "I was able to use my voice on news stations, speak to local politicians, and get my voice heard in places it had never been before," he shared in an interview with the Daily Hive. "After that, I decided it was time to do more."

Cameron started a non-profit organization, Black York Region Youth, for students to share ideas and make plans to achieve equity in high schools. He started a clothing line and from his profits, he donates to Black Youth Helpline and Caribbean African Canadian Social Services.



*Photo courtesy of Cameron Davis*

In 2021, Cameron took his work worldwide by attending the Children's General Assembly, which is broadcast to the United Nations, and allows youth to share research on different issues they care about and then find a solution. He has this to say to all young people, "We're the ones that are going to be going into power one day, and we're gonna be the ones making decisions in the future. If we're not giving youth their voice now, we'll have a whole generation that doesn't know what to do when they get into those positions."

## Active citizenship profile #4: Rana Nasrazadani

Rana Nasrazadani wants to change how people with disabilities are treated by government programs and officials. When she was in high school, her teachers often talked to her educational assistants rather than Rana herself about her marks or assignments. She felt silenced for most of her high school career because she was rarely asked her opinion. She felt that she was treated like a little kid instead of like a teenager. When Rana was in grade 12, she did not get the support she needed to apply to university. She had to transition to university on her own and studied human rights and equity studies at York University in Toronto.

Rana tried to change things in 2016 when she was part of a team reviewing a government report called the “We Have Something to Say Report”. She wanted to help families and young people speak out about special needs and change. Rana submitted her own story to the Report, which was released in May 2016. It was the first ever report to actually put young voices front and centre.



*Image source: The Toronto Star*

The report recommended that young people with disabilities be completely involved in decisions affecting their lives, setting up youth panels to advise the government on policies and services directly affecting youth with disabilities, providing mandatory special education training for student teachers and all school personnel who work with students with disabilities.



## Active citizenship profile #5: Sophia Mathur

Sophia Mathur is a young person with big hopes for the future. In 2018, she became the first student in Canada to join a global environmental movement by refusing to go to class on Fridays as a protest against global climate policies. She has marched in climate strikes and was involved in fighting for Canada's carbon tax, which was adopted by the Canadian government. Many people in Sophia's family are scientists and believe strongly that climate change is a serious problem. She has done a lot of work to help the planet.

In 2017, she participated in the Last Straw Project, where she went to all the restaurants and bars in her local city of Sudbury, Ontario to convince them to reduce their use of plastic straws. She helped to pressure the city council to then change its climate policies so that they can achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 (achieving net-zero emissions means the economy either emits no greenhouse gas emissions or balances its emissions through efforts like tree planting). She regularly plans actions in Sudbury like making videos demanding politicians, businesses and private individuals make real policies that fight climate change. She organizes a group called Fridays For Future to help with these actions and all of the members are kids! She spends about six hours a week on her activism.

In 2019, Sophia and six others took on a very big fight. They sued the Ontario government for not following through on its climate targets. They argued that the government was allowing more greenhouse gases to be emitted, leading to consequences like floods and polluted air. As of 2021, the case was still waiting to have its first full hearing.



*Photo courtesy of Sophia Mathur*

Sophia also wants to make sure Sudbury does not stop fighting climate change; she wants the city to form a youth climate council, so she does not have to continue doing so much work on her own. In an interview with TVO, Sophia had this to say to kids her age: "Since kids can't vote, we don't get to make decisions like adults do. But it's important that we share our voices about the climate crisis and talk to parents and people that can make those decisions. When I was younger, I even went lobbying and talked to politicians. But it's as simple as talking to your parents, telling them to consider the climate when they vote."