

Building more than business: Leadership, legacy and lasting impact

The 2026 Canadian Business Hall of Fame celebrates exceptional business leaders and their role in shaping the country

In recognition of the 47th Annual Canadian Business Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Celebration, Linda Dai, high school student and Junior Achievement Canada (JA) alumna, reflects on the nature of business and how her experience at JA has prepared her for entrepreneurship. Here, she introduces this year's inductees and highlights their outstanding business accomplishments and values and the lessons their leadership offers.



ANTHONY VON MANDL



CHIEF TERRANCE PAUL



SOHAM (SAM) AJMERA



OJUS AJMERA



TEJUS AJMERA

In an era where global commerce is often criticized as purely transactional and profit-driven, the Canadian Business Hall of Fame (CBHF) functions as the remedy – celebrating the lasting impact of Canadian business leadership across diverse industries.

Established in 1979, CBHF is Canada's highest business honour, recognizing trailblazers for their vision leadership, innovation, contributions to sustainable economic growth and community impact. Companions of the Order are mentors, stewards and exemplary role models for young Canadians, creating and sustaining lasting legacies that advance Canadian prosperity on the global stage and lay the groundwork for future generations.

This year, CBHF welcomes seven exceptional leaders who have transformed markets, broken boundaries and spearheaded progress. Tonight, they will be honoured at the annual CBHF Induction Ceremony and Celebration and their stories shared on cbhf.ca. All proceeds support Junior Achievement of Canada (JA Canada) in its mission to inspire and prepare young people for success.

As a JA alumna and youth entrepreneur, I have gained extraordinary opportunities with JA Canada to develop the skills, confidence and real-world experience needed to succeed in business and life. The inductees exemplify the skills and qualities that I learned to value through JA's programs. Their lessons serve as inspiration to all aspiring leaders.

Pursuit of passion

Founder and chairman of the Mark Anthony Group of Companies, **Anthony von Mandl** is a living symbol of entrepreneurship marked by the pursuit of passion. The architect of his own ascent, von Mandl built a Canadian multibillion-dollar beverage empire from the ground up.

At 22, he was penniless, yet possessed the vision for a flourishing Canadian wine industry that was then in its nascence. As a small, independent wine importer, he bought a near-bankrupt winery near Kelowna, B.C., and established Mission Hill Family Estate, which became Canada's first destination winery. Mission Hill gained international acclaim, elevating Canadian vinification onto the world stage.

Von Mandl later reshaped the beverage industry with ready-to-drink brands. In 2019, he launched White Claw Hard Seltzer, which has now sold more than one billion cases.

His view that "entrepreneurship success is not driven by money but by the pursuit of something extraordinary" defines his trajectory.

Von Mandl's entrepreneurial success is channeled into social welfare, cancer research, youth education, poverty alleviation and the arts.



HARTLEY T. RICHARDSON



CAROLYN A. HURSH

His journey parallels what I learned through JA's entrepreneurship programs: strive for excellence, tap into potential and translate personal passion into real-world endeavours.

Community-centred leadership

Chief Terrance Paul of the Membertou First Nation in Cape Breton, N.S., epitomizes the power of community-centred leadership. For four decades, Chief Paul has demonstrated visionary change by driving economic growth, fostering strategic partnerships and creating lasting opportunities for future generations.

Fueled by a commitment to education, land reclamation, financial self-reliance and the preservation of Mi'kmaq culture and language, Chief Paul's leadership reconciles cultural identity with opportunity and prosperity.

He has guided Membertou to become one of Canada's most culturally and economically flourishing Indigenous communities. Managing diverse corporate entities – including fisheries, recreation and real estate – he has generated wealth, employment and fostered long-term sustainability. Unprecedented outcomes have been produced under his leadership: a tripled land base, a near-80-per-cent employment rate and an impressive 90-per-cent graduation rate.

Chief Paul upholds intellectual, cultural and economic sovereignty. He encourages lasting, systemic change, laying a sustainable foundation and mentoring future leaders of Membertou. Long-term community success is not accidental but intentionally cultivated through investing in young people, strengthening skills and creating access to opportunity.

Just as Chief Paul has empowered Membertou's next generation to lead with confidence and cultural strength, JA Canada equips youth across the country with the entrepreneurial mindset, financial literacy and leadership experience needed to shape their own futures.

Legacy and the next generation

As fifth-generation leaders of James Richardson

& Sons, Ltd. (JRSL), **Hartley T. Richardson** and **Carolyn A. (Richardson) Hursh** are revered for their business legacy, entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to mentoring those who follow.

What began as a one-man grain merchandising operation has grown to become one of Canada's most successful and enduring companies, with global operations spanning agriculture and food production, energy, insurance, transportation and real estate.

Under the leadership of CEO **Hartley T. Richardson**, the seventh family member to be president of JRSL, the 169-year-old company diversified and flourished across essential industries without losing its core identity.

As former chair of JRSL's board of directors, **Hursh** was vital in leading corporate governance and strategic oversight during a period of rapid growth.

Together, **Richardson** and **Hursh** established a multigenerational conference focused on transfer of knowledge and values to ensure the sustainability of the business for future generations.

Today, the Winnipeg-based company remains synonymous with its founding values of integrity and trust as well as business practices underpinning its long-term viability and fiscal success.

Hartley and **Hursh** are committed to equipping the next generation of their family to grow the business and lead with integrity. They offer a blueprint for how strong leadership and knowledge-sharing can sustain and grow organizations well into the future, a principle that aligns with JA's mission to empower youth to lead and succeed in an ever-changing economy.

Work ethic, innovation and purpose

The FGF Group of Companies is one of the world's fastest-growing food manufacturing enterprises. What started with six team members has grown to more than 10,000, operating across 35 facilities in Canada and the U.S.; their

success is rooted in strong work ethic, innovation and a strong sense of purpose.

Founding chairman **Soham (Sam) Ajmera** arrived in Canada with just \$19 in his pocket yet sought opportunity. At 22, he launched Dough Delight, his first entrepreneurial endeavour. Abiding by the simple but pivotal tenet – pursue something meaningful and commit fully – **Soham** scaled Dough Delight, manufacturing millions of baked items daily.

Inspired by their father's work ethic and entrepreneurial journey, **Ojus** and **Tejus Ajmera** began their own paths in business. In 2004, **Soham**, **Ojus** and **Tejus** co-founded FGF Brands, in Toronto, which is now Canada's largest industrial baker and one of the world's fastest-growing producers of bakery and snack foods.

Using state-of-the-art technology, FGF defines itself as a tech company that bakes. Their success is grounded in a conviction that doing well and doing good can – and must – go hand in hand.

The Ajmeras are also committed philanthropists. Beyond financial investment, they apply business acumen and a focus on innovation and technology to support medical research. Their contributions have helped advance groundbreaking research in transplants, diabetes and prostate cancer.

The rise of FGF Brands demonstrates how hard work and innovation can transform industries. The same spirit is embodied in JA programs, which equip youth with the mindset and skills to continuously iterate, innovate and adapt in response to an evolving economy.

Inspiring future entrepreneurs made for Canada

A testament to their resilience, drive and pursuit of prosperity, the 2026 Canadian Business Hall of Fame honourees illuminate how impassioned business ventures extend beyond individual profit. They create lasting socio-economic impact, build strong foundations for prosperity and empower future generations.

The inductees stand as powerful reminders of what purposeful leadership can achieve. Together, the stories of the CBHF inductees and the mission of JA show that Canada's economic future will be shaped by those who pair vision with action and success with commitment to community.

Linda Dai attends secondary school in Vancouver and is a JA Canada alumna. The 2026 Canadian Business Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Celebration will be held tonight, May 28, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Visit cbhf.ca.

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