



SeedChange

75

**years of
growing
a better
world**

A word from our Chair and Vice Chair

As you know, USC Canada's new name is SeedChange.

Deciding to update the name of this iconic charity has not been a quick decision. In fact, our records show that the first time the question was raised was in 1948, when the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada dissolved its formal ties with its sister organization, the Unitarian Service Committee of Boston.

If successive boards chose to keep the name over the decades, it was because of the outstanding contribution of our many Unitarian donors and volunteers. It was also because the name conveys “the oneness of mankind

in which our organization passionately believes,” as Lotta Hitschmanova put it. Both sentiments still ring true for us today. Yet, the time had come for our name to catch up with the evolution of our work.

Keeping seeds in farmers' hands is powerful.

Dr. Lotta was the first to recognize the importance of supporting farmers when she launched our first farmer training program in 1968, in India. Our work with farmers expanded organically until it became our exclusive focus in 2007.

Today, we are deeply rooted



in this life-changing work. Few organizations are lucky enough to stay vibrant, true to themselves and relevant for 75 years. We couldn't have done it without your unwavering commitment to creating a better world by helping others help themselves!

Canadians' growing passion for good food, good seeds, and social justice bodes well for another 75 years of seeding change together.

We feel deep gratitude for those who have stayed by our side through the many seasons of this organization, helping to shape who we are today.

We hope you will find that our new image reflects the vibrant, nurturing and grounded nature of the organization built over the years.

Thank you for your dedication to changing the world with us, one seed at a time.



Abra Brynne and Leticia Deawuo
Chair and Vice Chair,
Board of Directors



A word from our Executive Directors

When we became Executive Directors in 2016, we gained the privilege and responsibility of stewarding an organization in which thousands of caring Canadians have placed their trust over the years.

We have seen the change you've seeded on the ground. We've had the privilege of meeting many inspiring farmers who are supported by your generosity. Each contribution makes a real difference for these women and men who strive to improve their lives and create a better world for us all.

We are proud of this organization's 75 years of impact. None of this would have been possible without your impressive loyalty to the cause!

Our hope today is to grow our community of supporters so that we can keep seeding change in a fast-evolving world.

With climate change at our doors, we urgently need more sustainable ways to grow our food. Farmers need support to retain access to land and local seeds – essential assets that allow communities to meet their basic needs. In many areas of the world, even in Canada, this continues to be a struggle.

Thankfully, food is a powerful way to grow a better world. It's a promise of better health, a vehicle to build community, and a vital connection to the Earth that sustains us. That's why supporting farmers



changes lives. That's why our commitment to this work is here to stay.

Reflecting on our first 75 years, it's clear that we stand on the shoulders of many generous, caring and dedicated people like you.

Lotta's vision of a "better, kinder world" is alive. Our mission evolved, but our values remain: compassion for others, belief in people's incredible potential, and a deep respect for the autonomy of those we support.

We hope "SeedChange" will signal to Canadians of all ages that they can make the world a better place by supporting farmers. The name is fresh and inviting – and it reflects our longstanding supporters. After all, together we have been seeding change since 1945.

We thank you, and look forward to writing the next chapter of this incredible story together.

Jane Rabinowicz
and Martin Settle
Executive Directors



Dr. Lotta

Born in 1909 in Prague, Lotta Hitschmanova was intelligent and fiercely determined. Even as she fled her home country to escape Nazi persecution, she helped hungry and displaced people along the way. When she arrived in Canada as a refugee in 1942, her desire to help continued.

Lotta briefly worked in Washington with the UN refugee relief agency before returning to Ottawa with a vision. She turned to the local Unitarian community to help realize this vision – and in 1945 the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada was born.

Shortly after, Lotta learned that her parents had perished in concentration camps. She worked tirelessly at the helm of USC Canada “so that their sacrifice may not be in vain.” Illness forced her retirement in 1983 but her USC family remained close until she passed away in 1990.

During her exceptional life of service, Lotta saw the worst tragedies of her time, yet never stopped believing in the power of hope and generosity.

Her values and visionary principles still guide us today.





HER DREAM

“To think that one day the world will be a good place to live, not only for us in North America but for everyone, everywhere in the world, because it can be done.”

“There can be sufficient food grown, and there can be sufficient schools for eager children, and life can be something very beautiful.”



HER APPROACH

“Excellent, absolutely trustworthy people can be found in every country, I believe, if you take the time to detect them and provide training for them. This is our basic principle.”

“Why do so many people trust the USC? Because it’s completely Canadian, because it’s non-denominational, because it gives aid regardless of religion, or race or political affiliation. It’s well run, closely supervised, and small investments bring big results.”

“The strength of USC lies in its imagination, its flexibility and its direct contact with the people. It’s the link between you and them.”



**WE HAVE GROWN AND
ADAPTED SINCE OUR START
IN 1945**



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**BUT OUR FOCUS ON  
BUILDING A BETTER WORLD  
HAS NEVER CHANGED.**

Alma Yamaris Hernández Aguirre,  
Honduras

## 1950s

Canadians across the country mobilize to send goods, clothing and food to victims of conflict and famine around the world.



# Where does your journey with us begin?



## 1945

The Unitarian Service Committee of Canada is launched to help rebuild war-torn Europe. That first year, Lotta raises \$64,000.



## 1948

"The USC" becomes an independent secular organization, but retains its name.

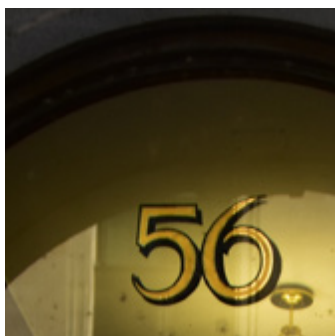
## 1968

After witnessing famine in Bihar, India, Lotta works with a local monk to start an agricultural training program for youth. A similar program launches five years later in Bangladesh.



## 1979

Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova is made a Companion of the Order of Canada for her visionary work and innovative approach to humanitarianism.



## 1965

The organization moves into 56 Sparks Street. The address becomes the famous sign-off of Lotta's public service announcements.



## 1970

25-year old Bruce Cockburn first gives to USC Canada, remembering the kind and compassionate woman who had visited his classroom when he was 10.

## 1989

To help Ethiopian farmers recover from drought and civil war, the Seeds of Survival program is born to save and multiply lost seed varieties.



Seid Shiferan and Ansha Seid,  
*Ethiopia*

## 2007

Working with farmers from all over the world to grow local food using good seeds, USC Canada becomes USC Canada's exclusive focus.



Deisy Glo



## 1983

After nearly 40 years of tireless work, Lotta steps down from her role due to illness. She passes away peacefully in Ottawa on August 1, 1990.



Melaku Worede and  
Friederike Knabe

## 1996

Lotta's legacy inspires many donors to leave a gift to USC Canada in their will. This leads to the creation of the USC Foundation and the Lotta Hitschmanova Legacy Fund.

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healthy  
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actices,  
nda's



Gloria Delcid,  
Honduras



Sitan Diarra, Mali



Annie Richard,  
Canada

## 2013

Recognizing that farmers in Canada also need support to rebuild local seed security, USC Canada obtains private funding to launch its first domestic program.

## 2019

Just ahead of our 75th anniversary, we adopt a new, more memorable name that reflects our work with farmers and honours your impact through time:



# SeedChange



Jit Bahadur Singar,  
Nepal



# SeedChange

**We are a non-profit rooted in the notions of human dignity and equality, and focused on contributing to making the world a “better, kinder place for all” as our founder, Lotta Hitschmanova, put it.**

**Today, we are part of a global movement fighting for justice, health and sustainability by shifting the way we grow our food.**

**We work with farmers around the world to strengthen their ability to grow food sustainably, using locally adapted seeds. By harnessing the power of good seeds, farmers’ leadership and global solidarity, we help communities thrive.**

**Together, we can build a just, sustainable and well nourished world.**

**CHANGE STARTS WITH SEEDS.**





## GENDER EQUALITY

**“When I was a child I never imagined I would get to change many things. Now, I’ve made efforts to move forward. I want to continue growing and learning in my life.”**

**“This is the moment for me to be confident.”**

Herlinda Matias Ramos, a 24 year old Mayan woman living in the Guatemalan highlands, was hired by our local partner to help women and men in her community work together, as equals, to find solutions to water shortages.



## JUSTICE

**“We had an agricultural base for hundreds of years before European settlement. Today, we must reclaim our food sovereignty by using our land, and regaining our knowledge of growing our own foods. This potato project is one part of this.”**

Carl McCorrister, from Peguis First Nation, northern Manitoba, started a community garden when he retired to help his community grow healthy, affordable food. Through our domestic program, he’s breeding a potato suited to the northern climate.



## HEALTH

**“We’ve lost indigenous seeds which had been here for generations. We are so glad to see those seeds back in our farm. Local seeds are so delicious. And since they were grown without chemicals or inorganic fertilizers, we like using them for our families.”**

Bontu Haji Hussein lives in Arsi, Ethiopia. Your support allowed Bontu’s community to recover rare local seed varieties by sharing them in a community seed bank.

## SUSTAINABILITY

**“I feel proud when my three year-old son can go and pick healthy food directly from the garden. Thank you for these projects. They are of great use to our communities.”**

Edwin Adonis Nolasco Pereira, a young farmer in Las Flores, Honduras, learned how to grow crops and save seeds thanks to your support. He and his wife now grow 21 varieties of crops and 10 species of fruit trees, and have earned enough to buy a house.



# A life of giving

Jean Greig first heard Lotta Hitschmanova's distinctive voice on the radio in the early 1950s. "She said they were short on things for babies. I had just had a daughter. So I decided to send diapers to the Unitarians."

It was a simple gesture of generosity between one mother in rural Canada and another one rebuilding her life in post-war Europe. But for Jean, it was the start of a habit of generosity that's been going strong for nearly 70 years.

"Lotta said that when they had enough money, they would go and make sure it was used properly. I liked the thought of that. Ever since then we have been giving a little bit of money every year."

Today, Jean lives in a seniors' residence, where her three daughters and one son often come to visit her. "I like to think that my children are like me, and that they think about other people."

Few people would have guessed that a volunteer organization started by a penniless refugee in 1945 would still be going strong today, entering a new chapter under a new name. Years of steady, dedicated support from people like you and Jean made it possible.

Thank you.





**“I LIKE THE NAME SEEDCHANGE. IT CONVEYS DR. LOTTA’S VISION, IT REFLECTS OUR SHARED LEGACY AS DONORS, AND IT OPENS THE DOOR FOR OTHERS TO JOIN OUR MOVEMENT.”**

To hear more of Bruce Cockburn’s thoughts on SeedChange and view the special video message he recorded for you please visit

**[weseedchange.org/welcome](https://weseedchange.org/welcome)**





**Reclaim  
the power  
of food**

**weseedchange.org**

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