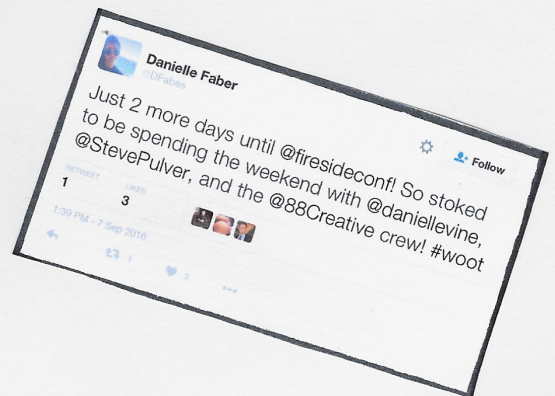


# firesideconf

bancroft, ontario  
sept 9, 10 & 11, 2016

DISCONNECT TO CONNECT FROM SEPTEMBER 9, 10 & 11TH, 2016

## Canada's Invite-Only Technology, Innovation & Investor Summit.





CANADIAN STARTUP NEWS & TECH INNOVATION

## THIS YEAR'S #FIRESIDECONF FEATURES TALKS FROM 500 STARTUPS CANADA HEAD SANJAY SINGHAL, WEALTHSIMPLE CEO MIKE KATCHEN

"We had no idea how incredibly impactful #firesideconf could be when we eliminated PowerPoint presentations, microphones, cell phones, and Internet. Given the feedback we received from last year, we're more excited than ever that this goal of 'disconnecting to connect' is a fundamental pillar of #firesideconf," said Pulver. "This year we are doubling down on our approach when it comes to programming by taking incredible advantage of our 750+ acre green space and private lake venue."

Confirmed speakers (though more speakers will be confirmed in the coming weeks) include:

- Jeff Keni Pulver, co-founder of Vonage / Internet Pioneer
- Brenda Halloran, Mayor of Waterloo, 2006-2014, currently CEO of WEK Effect
- Sanjay Singhal, Head of 500 Startups Canada
- Mike Katchen, CEO of Wealthsimple
- Julie Perofsky, VP, Customer Strategy at Influitive
- Georgia Dow, Senior Editor, iMore.com
- Ted Graham, PWC Canada's Innovation leader

"As far as we know, we're the only tech conference in the world without technology. You simply cannot create a sustainable, vibrant and world-changing community when your heads are buried in your devices all weekend," said Pulver. "We live in the moment. There's no live tweeting or snap stories. This creates an incredibly immersive experience for attendees that results in a truly transformative weekend that ultimately builds and strengthens the innovation landscape."



Lucas Chang

@Lucas\_Chang



Follow

It's decided. @firesideconf is my new favourite conference (after @y2youth).

RETWEET  
1

LIKES  
3



10:51 AM - 10 Sep 2016



1



3







**Takara Small** @takarasmall · 23h  
Me and 2016's awesome @firesideconf media panelists  
@jessicagallang @Georgia\_Dow @rickspace + moderator  
@erinbury.



**Sanjay Singhal** @ssinghal · 6h  
Thanks to @StevePulver & @daniellevine for having me at #firesideconf.  
An amazing gathering of the tech community!



**Fireside Conference**  
@firesideconf



Following

🎵 No cell phones  
No technology  
But out in these woods 🎵  
You can see  
The milky way better than any other place on  
earth 🎵

RETWEETS

2

LIKES

7



9:03 AM - 7 Sep 2016



**Erin Bury** @erinbury  
@firesideconf was the best weekend. New  
friends, 4am campfires, inspiring talks, and the  
#Cabin88 crew. ❤️🔥



**Lighthouse Labs** @lighthouse\_labs  
We came, we saw, we tore up the #firesideconf  
dance floor 🔥. HUGE thanks to @StevePulver &  
@daniellevine

LIKES

6

8:03 AM - 12 Sep 2016

## Upside @ Fireside

### How 250 Techies Gave Back This Weekend

"Brilliant." "Inspiring." "Epic." A few of the words that have been used to describe Fireside Conference this weekend. I'd like to add to that list, "Humbling." "Impactful." "Visionary".

“ On Saturday night, Fireside Conference Co-Founders Steven Pulver and Daniel Levine announced that Fireside Conference would host an auction- with a twist. This would be an all-pay auction, in which all bids would be locked in- so whether you won the 2017 Fireside Conference tickets or not, you were committed to donating the amount you bid. The energy and excitement that followed were incredible- the room burst alive with generous founders, investors and influencers bidding on the tickets and making donations. ”

“ Fireside Conference has had an extraordinary impact on the community- with over \$10,000 donated to worthy causes, and 7 companies having donated equity, which will result in significant future donations. We are humbled to have been a part of this weekend. ”



Pictured here include many, but not all, of the following: Founders who donated equity to the Upside Foundation, People who donated money to Ladies Learning Code, Upside Foundation members at Fireside Conference (Michael Carter and Eric Riz), Fireside Conference Co-Founders Steven Pulver & Daniel Levine, and Upside Foundation Manager Jen Couldrey

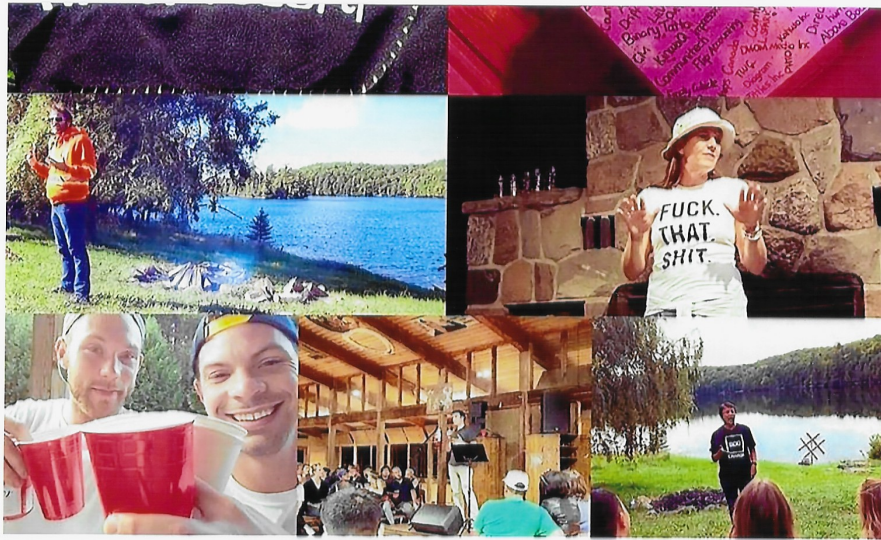




**dani\_mcsmith**

Camp Walden >

FOLLOW



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**dani\_mcsmith** How can you begin to summarize a weekend that brought together 200+ of our community's best and brightest in the most beautiful natural setting? #firesideconf once again was a whirlwind of inspiring talks, stories of growth, failure and huge wins, midnight poutine buffets, cabin dance parties, the chance to raise over \$10K for charity, and opportunities to bond that aren't otherwise possible in our busy lives. We disconnected for 3 days to connect to each other and learn. Can't wait til year 3! Thank you @stevenpulver & Daniel Levine for allowing us to partake in the magic



**BridesMade** @BridesMadeCA · 4h

Had an amazing time at the @firesideconf this weekend; honoured to have been surrounded by such an amazing group of people. #firesideconf



**Rebel.com** @rebeldotcom · 4h

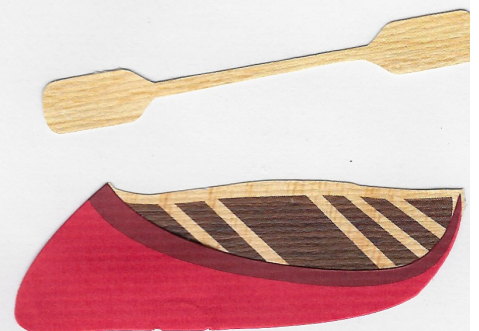
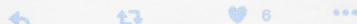
The Rebel crew had a great time at #firesideconf. Love the pics @izzydoesizzy! @firesideconf #camping #arebelwashere



**Iskender P.S.** @izzydoesizzy

#firesideconf 🍌 in a nutshell:

- 1 Real, unfiltered people
- 2 Fun & friendships
- 3 Truth bombs & emotions





Huge weekend at @firesideconf. Learning, dance parties, new friends, 4am campfires...my heart is full. 🌊🌙❤️



Thanks for an amazing weekend @firesideconf !  
Great job Dan and Steven! I can't wait for next year!



5:03 PM - 11 Sep 2016



RandomActsOfFitness @raofitness · 3h

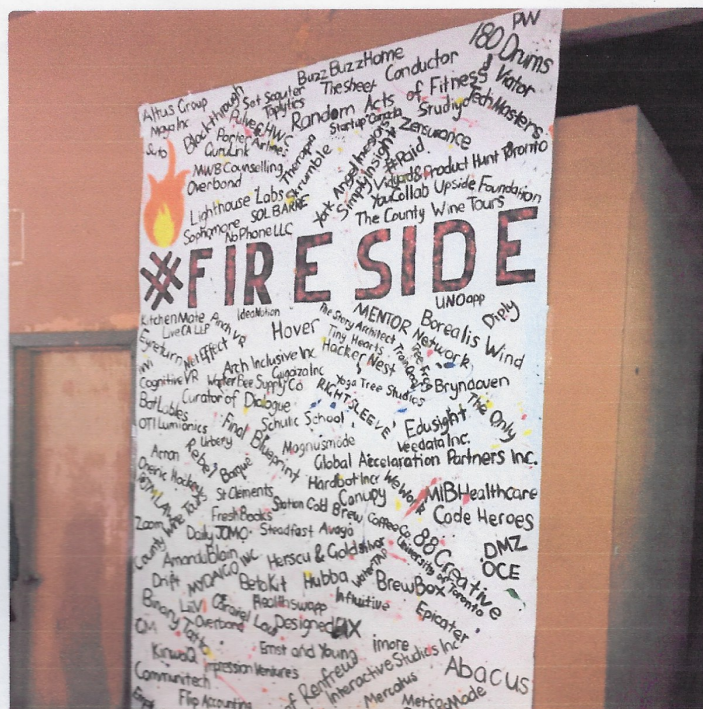
Thanks @firesideconf for a great weekend and allowing us to meet so many amazing people! #firesideconf



I feel like post [#firesideconf](#) is going to be just like post-camp. Can't stop talking about it for weeks after.



LIKES  
10





jeffkenipulver

Camp Walden >



♥ 57 likes

jeffkenipulver Special thanks to my cousin, Steve Pulver and Daniel Levine for the opportunity to speak at #Firesideconf this year. Together they gathered an amazing community of startups, entrepreneurs, dreamers, thinkers and doers. A group of people who have and continue to do some pretty amazing things. I am grateful for the chance to connect with their community and to make some new friends along the way. .



Lucas Chang  
@Lucas\_Chang



Follow

As a community builder, a thing that inspired me most abt @firesideconf was seeing the comm'ty vibe that @daniellevine & @StevePulver built

RETWEET

1

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4



mydaigo

JamesDaigle  
@mydaigoinc



+ Follow

Thank you Steven & Daniel for organizing such an amazing event this past weekend.  
[@firesideconf](#) was truly inspiring!



(((KarenSD))) [@karensd](#) · 20h

Without a doubt, [@firesideconf](#) was the absolute best exclamation mark to my summer. [#grateful](#) [#moreto come](#)



3



9



Rick Spence  
@rickspence

Not a scene from a horror flick, but from [#FiresideConf](#). More fun than a barrel of movies. Get your 2017 ticket now!



LIKES  
8

9:45 PM · 11 Sep 2016



8



Kelly  
@kellybergeronsf

Best time ever? or BEST TIME EVER?!

[@firesideconf](#)



# In the news .

WHY IT MIGHT BE TIME TO SELL YOUR HOME. *FP2*

## CAMP OUT

*WHY LEAVING THE OFFICE (AND CELL SIGNAL) BEHIND IS GOOD FOR STARTUP FOUNDERS. ENTREPRENEUR, FP5*



CANADA'S BUSINESS VOICE, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2016

### *Getting away from it all*



**ERIN BURY**  
*Startup Spotlight*

**I**f you're an entrepreneur, chances are the last time you truly disconnected — no email, no phone, no thinking about your long to-do list — is a distant memory. While starting a company means control over your own work schedule, it often means work goes from 9-5 to 24/7. That's why new retreats are popping up to help bring some relaxation, in-person networking and old-fashioned fun to Canadian entrepreneurs.

One of these retreats is Fireside Conference, which held its second annual event two weekends ago. Held at Camp Walden in Bancroft, Ont. — a camp for kids during the summer months — Fireside brings together investors, entrepreneurs, journalists and startup enthusiasts for a weekend of activities. While there are educational components including keynotes from notable entrepreneurs like Wealtheasy founder Michael Katchen, the main focus of the weekend is putting down your phone and disconnecting from the online world in order to make valuable face-to-face connections.

Fireside founders Daniel Levine and Stephen Pulver said they started the event to give entrepreneurs an alternative to traditional conferences, one with activities like water-skiing, yoga and campfires on the agenda.

"We knew there was a better way for innovators and investors to connect in a way more personal, rewarding and exciting way," the founders said in an interview. "So we swapped the projector for the glow of a campfire and stars, the drink ticket for an open bar and the stage for a community that comes together as peers."

See BURY on FP6

# cont

## Inspired by notion of play

**BURY**

*Continued from FP5*

They said Fireside is well suited to entrepreneurs because it gives them an immersive program that means they eat, sleep and socialize with fellow entrepreneurs and key stakeholders in a setting that's not a boardroom table or conference venue. Also, they believe entrepreneurs often need to be reminded to slow down and take care of themselves.

"Some of the younger entrepreneurs that join us think they need to be hustling 24/7, but the more experienced entrepreneurs and mentors will tell them the importance of living sustainably and taking care of themselves mentally and physically," Levine and Pulver said. "Taking a couple days to recharge, refocus and form meaningful relationships can be the very thing busy founder really needs."

This year's event hosted more than 250 attendees, and the team plans to hold events throughout the year to keep the Fireside community connected.

For entrepreneurs who need to truly disconnect from thinking about their business, there's Camp Reset, an adult summer camp held at the Ecology Retreat Centre outside Toronto. The retreat was founded by several entrepreneurs and creative industry players, including serial entrepreneur Andrew Peek and the Centre for Social Innovation's director of culture, Adil Dhallia. It's designed to be an escape from everyday life — attendees adopt nicknames instead of their given names, and leave their phones and Internet connections at home.



There's also a rule that guests aren't allowed to talk about their jobs, or ask anyone else what they do for a living.

"We were inspired by the notion of play and just how absent it had become from our lives," Peek said. "We looked around and realized we had completely bought into a hyper-productive culture where every minute needed to be spent efficiently and that lost in that was the creativity and freedom that comes from simply doing things that have no end goal in mind."

Now in its second year, Camp Reset expanded to two weekends this summer with more than 200 attendees in total. Ultimately, Peek said, retreats like this are meant to help attendees rethink their priorities — in business and in life — and come back with a new take on their business.

"We had a camper leave a testimonial this year that quoted Albert Einstein who said 'Play is the highest form of research' and I think that really sums up a lot of the feedback we receive," Peek said.

"It's as if the weekend becomes a deeper exploration of what the heart truly wants, but never gets a chance to explore by virtue of living in a world of productivity hacks.

"That's not to say people come home from Reset and re-route their businesses, but they do seem to return with a keen eye for what fills their cup and several new directions they hadn't previously noticed."

*Financial Post*

*Erin Bury is managing director at 88 Creative, a digital marketing and design agency in Toronto.*

*Twitter.com/erinbury*



## *Hey, Check Out My New Phone! It Does Absolutely Nothing*

\* \* \*

Functionless gadgets offer solace to the  
screen-weary; no jack, or anything else

BY RYAN KNUTSON

The crowd gasped with oohs and aahs when Chris Sheldon pulled his company's new gadget from a silky black bag in front of hundreds of techies.

"We are very proud to introduce the least-advanced NoPhone ever," he said at a technology conference in Canada this month. The NoPhone is a plastic rectangle that looks like a smartphone but does absolutely nothing. More than 10,000 have been sold in the past two years for about \$10 each.

The latest model is even more refined. It is simply nothing, delivered in plastic packaging. Mr. Sheldon and his business partner, Van

Gould, call it the NoPhone Air.

"We took away the headphone jack. And then we took away everything else," Mr. Gould said to the crowd. "It may look like nothing is in this packaging. But that's what's so beautiful about it."



*NoPhone Air*

As millions of people around the world race to buy Apple Inc.'s new iPhone 7 and wireless AirPods headphones, Messrs. Sheldon and Gould are part of the growing smartphone-resistant counterculture. They were inspired to make the NoPhone, pitched as "a fake phone for people addicted to real phones," after seeing everyone at a rooftop bar in New York glued to their smartphones.

*Please see PHONE page A10*

# PHONE

Continued from Page One

Other anti-smartphone converts have reverted back to flip phones and created vacation companies, mobile apps and bags that block cell signals.

Last week, superstar Kanye West tweeted: "I got rid of my phone so I can have air to create." Singer Katy Perry replied: "unplug to connect."

Stand-up comedian Brett Kline got so frustrated with smartphone selfie sticks that he made a video of him snipping them with bolt cutters all over New York. It turned out to be a prank, with fake phones and actors as the victims, but the video has more than 1.3 million views

on YouTube since Sept. 1.

"Technology is making people sociopaths," says Buddy Bolton, a comedian who recorded the selfie-stick clip-and-run incidents with Mr. Kline.

Even the original human voice of Siri, the iPhone's virtual assistant, in the U.S. says it is time for people to put down their smartphones.

"Their minds are somewhere else, or they're staring at their phones. And they don't know how to relate to other humans," says Susan Bennett, a voiceover actress.

The conference where Messrs. Sheldon and Gould unveiled the NoPhone Air on Sept. 10 was at a summer camp about two hours west of Ottawa. There was no cellphone reception. No devices were allowed.

Toronto lawyers Steven Pulver and Daniel Levine started the Fireside Conference in early 2015. They had attended dozens of tech conferences over the years and felt like smartphones were taking over.

At most other events, says Mr. Pulver, you spend "half the time tweeting or having your head down in your phone." The two men decided to create a technology gathering without technology.

They worried last year that no one would show up to the



**Chris Sheldon and Van Gould demonstrated the new NoPhone Air at the Fireside Conference in Canada earlier this month.**

first conference. Mr. Levine, 28 years old, says some people told them: "We can't get away for a weekend and have no cellphone."

It turned out that the absence of cellphones led to social interactions many people weren't used to.

Without Google Maps, people had to ask for directions around the sprawling camp. Attendance at this year's conference more

than doubled to about 270 people.

"You have to go up to a stranger, you might have to meet them, you might have to have a conversation," says Mr. Gould, 30. "I think we had more eye contact this weekend than probably any time since we were children."

Douglas Duncan of the University of Colorado has studied the impact that technology can have on the classroom. He has tried desperately to keep students off their phones during his astronomy class.

About 70% of college students use their phones during class, according to his research, and grades for those students are about a half-letter lower on average than for students who don't use their phones.

Last year, Dr. Duncan told students to download Flipd, an app that tracked their phone use during his lectures. He said he would get a report showing which students opened their phones and give extra credit of one percentage point to those who opened them the least.

About a third of the class used them anyway. "pretty addicting," he laments.

Flipd's marketing director, Anna Harvey, says the free app has nearly 50,000 downloads. It was originally developed as a way for parents to limit children's smartphone usage by locking down certain apps or the entire phone during preset times. Flipd soon realized adults were using it on themselves.

"We had people asking us for more and more hours," not just the one or two hours Flipd allowed at first, she says. "People were like: 'I want 8 hours.'"

Ms. Harvey, 25, has an

iPhone, but it doesn't have a data plan and she uses it only in areas with Wi-Fi access. Her primary device is a flip phone, which she started using to save money and kept because she liked having fewer distractions.

Joe Hollier thought even flip phones had too many features, so he created the Light Phone, a credit-card sized device that costs \$100. The "phone away from phone," as he calls it, lets users make and receive phone calls but nothing else. Calls are forwarded from the owner's primary phone number.

"Do I always want a computer in my pocket? Probably not," says Mr. Hollier, 26, a Brooklyn, N.Y., artist turned tech entrepreneur. The Light Phone will be available later this year and has more than 6,000 presales so far.

Matt McCausland found it hard to put down the NoPhone that was in his gift bag at the tech conference in Canada. He says he took at least 50 fake group selfies in two days.

As a joke, "I would pull it out when you would normally pull your phone out," pretending to answer an incoming call or order car service using Uber, says Mr. McCausland. "The ironic thing is it actually did set my mind at ease, so I wasn't missing my phone anymore. My actual phone."

BILLY LEE/BELIGHT.CO

# Scary startup campfire stories

## Retreat offers hard lessons, stokes ambition

RICK SPENCE  
Growth Curve

At Camp Walden, a children's camp on the shores of Hardwood Lake, two hours west of Ottawa, in the dog days of summer, a former entrepreneur talks about the benefits of going bankrupt; the guy who coined the term "cleantech" explains why entrepreneurs have just a few years left to save the world; and an entrepreneur-turned-venture capitalist reveals the one word VCs hate to use.

Clearly, this is no kids' camp. Fireside Conference, the second annual wilderness get-together for Canadian tech entrepreneurs, aims to stoke the ambitions of startups even as it shows them the true, tooth-and-claw reality of startup life.

Here are some key Fireside takeaways:

**Everyone's winging it.** Mike Katchen, founder and CEO of Wealhtsimple, the fintech that makes investing cheaper and less boring, kicked off this year's sessions with a candid talk by the firepit at the lake. Despite raising more than \$30 million in financing in his company's first year, Katchen assured his fellow founders that many of his decisions are driven by hunches. "This is the first time I've done this," he said. "I have no idea what I'm doing half the time."

**Cleantech is huge, but it's over.** The next lakeside speaker was Nicholas Parker, a former entrepreneur in environmental technology who founded one of the world's first sustainable-investment firms, Cleantech Group, in 2002.

Parker, managing partner of Toronto-based Global Acceleration Partners, thinks the term "cleantech" is passé, displaced by what he calls nextech — the nexus of synergies derived from the interaction of nature, new media and neuroscience.

He urged attendees to combine their business, tech and data smarts to create new environmental solutions in energy, agriculture, waste management, water, travel and financial services.

"We're going to see a bigger and bigger convergence of IT and clean," he said.

**Bankruptcy has an upside.** Sanjay Singhal, a serial entrepreneur turned venture investor, has just brought Silicon Valley-based 500 Startups to Canada. Nearly 20 years ago, he saw an opportunity to do an end run around the PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) industry by creating a Palm Pilot-like device that also offered email. ("Two years before the BlackBerry," he jibed.)

Singhal created a prototype and raised US\$500,000. But then he blew it all, overspending on travel and launch parties while blithely waiting for more VCs to invest.

Staff warned he was close to the edge, but he ignored them. When a key VC reneged, Singhal's company was insolvent.

"Going bankrupt sucked," he said. "But after that it was one of the best periods of my life. You realize you don't need so much."

Singhal offered three lessons learned from that experience: Listen to people who care about your business; talk to all potential investors, not just a few big VCs; and be paranoid about cash.

"When things go to hell, they go really, really fast."

See SPENCE on FP5

# Secret sauce is community

SPENCE

Continued from FP4

**VCs don't always tell the truth.** After dinner, Christian Lassonde, a serial tech entrepreneur who learned to code at age seven, and founded Toronto-based Impression Ventures to invest in fintech startups, interpreted VCs' more cryptic behaviours.

Point 1: "No excuse is too feeble" to turn down an opportunity to invest in your company.

Point 2: VCs need to look busy, so they'll usually take a meeting with you. But that doesn't mean they care.

Point 3: After you meet them, VCs often say, "Come

back in three or four months," because they hate to say No. They don't want to get cut off in case you make it big, Lassonde said.

On the other hand, he said, "If you talk to a VC and they don't call you back the next day, it's a No."

**Fear is dangerous; vulnerable**

reduce anxiety in their office, she offered this advice, "the best thing you can do is show your own vulnerability. If leaders can do it, we all can."

The potential, however, is huge for immersive, creative events such as Fireside to make a difference.

After his speech, Wealhtsimple's Katchen was asked what he learned working in Silicon Valley.

He concluded the Valley's secret sauce is community — the ability to meet other founders, potential investors or veteran technology executives, just by picking up a phone or walking into a restaurant.

"We have to make a bigger

## WE HAVE TO MAKE A BIGGER EFFORT IN CANADA.

**ability is good.** In a session called "Startups are Scary," Lindsay Rothman, a product manager at Freshbooks, noted how the increasing

For bosses who want to



BILLY LEE / BELIGHTCA

Christian Lassonde, a serial tech entrepreneur who learned to code at age seven, interpreted venture capitalists more cryptic behaviours.

effort in Canada to create a community," he said. Looking at the entrepreneurs, founders and investors lounging before him on the hillside, he added, "Things like this."

Financial Post  
rick@rickspence.ca  
Twitter.com/RickSpence

Rick Spence is a writer, consultant and speaker specializing in entrepreneurship.



CANADIAN STARTUP NEWS & TECH INNOVATION

BY JESSICA GAIARD / CANADIAN STARTUP NEWS, TECHNOLOGY / SEPTEMBER 16, 2016

## #FIRESIDECONF BRINGS 250 PEOPLE TO THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE AND ASKS THEM TO CONNECT

Overall, both Levine and Pulver say that their “disconnect to connect” method allows both speakers and attendees to form authentic relationships with the colleagues they often see in passing at tech networking events, and actually learn the basics of what it takes to build a great company from each other.

“People tell us from time to time, ‘I can’t make it this year — work and life is too busy’. The truth is, there is never a ‘good’ time. It’s these people that probably need to disconnect the most,” said Pulver.

Levine notes that learning from leaders about their failures, creating company culture, and raising their millions doesn’t require a Powerpoint and a stage to be meaningful. “In fact, it’s the very absence of those things and the campfire, lake, and stars in their place that really spark connections and conversation like no other setting,” he said.



“Honestly, I was nervous going into the weekend having not been to camp before and being completely off the grid. But at the end of it, I’d met new people from within the startup community, spent time with my coworkers so far away from the office in the best environment, and learned many valuable lessons from the speakers along the way. Above all though, you’re never really going to learn anything until you push yourself into new situations and give it a try for yourself. As cliché as it may sound and as tough as it can be to break out of the regular cycle, it’ll never really settle in and become real until you experience it firsthand for yourself.”

Brittany is a Digital Account Executive at 88 Creative. You can give her a follow on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

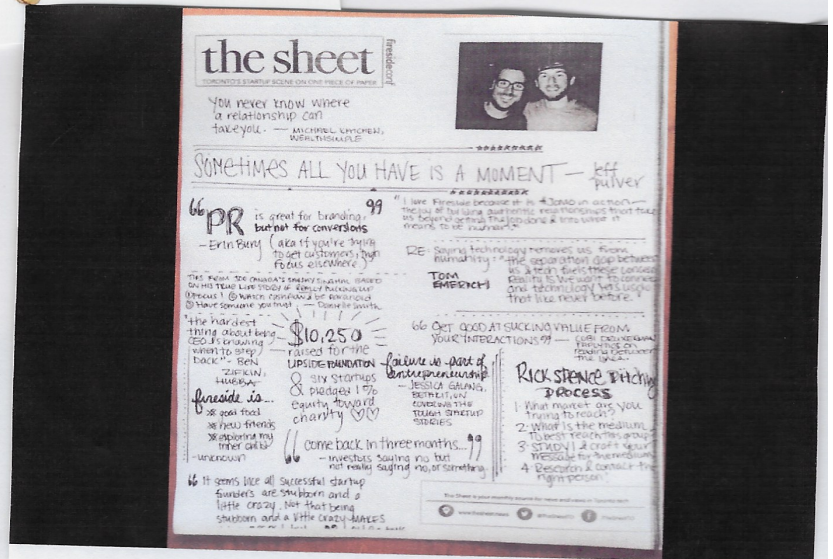


#CLIENT



♥ 31 likes

micherreri The only evidence I have of this weekend's #firesideconf. To everyone I met, 🙏. After (taking a nap and) reflecting on all the conversations that were had around the fire, by the docks while stargazing, in the dining hall, and on the volleyball courts; I feel rejuvenated, encouraged and excited! Oh! And here's Alex, promising to be my first client 🙌



The Sheet @TheSheetTO · 22h

So thrilled to have shared @firesideconf with such an amazing group of people. See you next year! 🙌



7



21





# until 2017...

