Unsinkable

About Unsinkable

Unsinkable is a Canadian mental health charity that has helped share over 400 stories, supported 100+ youth, collaborated with over 50 organizations, and connected with so many more in the last 5 years.

Boosting Digital Fundraising

Unsinkable has leveraged CanadaHelps' Customizable Donation Forms, automated tax receipting, and the Charity Profile Page to enhance fundraising and donor stewardship.

Learn more about how Unsinkable has seen a 5% year-over-year increase in online donations, saved 0.25% in transaction fees, and garnered greater visibility to attract more donors with CanadaHelps.

Overview

CanadaHelps has done a good job of showcasing itself as the premier online fundraising platform. If I say CanadaHelps, people know what I'm talking about.

— Hailey H., Executive Director, Unsinkable

MEET UNSINKABLE

Unsinkable is a Canadian mental health charity founded in 2019 by four-time Olympian and mental health advocate Silken Lawman. The organization was born out of Silken's personal journey and her desire to create a safe space where people could share their lived experiences, connect with others, and feel seen.

Since its inception, Unsinkable has been dedicated to fostering resilience, empowerment, and community-building by amplifying diverse mental health stories across Canada.

In the last 5 years, Unsinkable has helped share over 400 stories, supported over 100 youth, collaborated with over 50 organizations, and connected with so many more through various initiatives and channels.

HAILEY HECHTMAN

Executive Director

Hailey is a social impact leader, mental health advocate, and nonprofit executive with a decade of experience leading social service organizations. She is passionate about empowering individuals on their mental health journeys and creating collaborative, impact-driven spaces that foster meaningful change. As Executive Director of Unsinkable, Hailey plays a key role in strengthening partnerships, scaling the organization's impact, and driving strategic innovation. Her work bridges lived experience and evidence-based approaches, ensuring that storytelling remains a powerful tool for mental health advocacy, community-building, and system-wide change.

MARIA ESTRADA

Program Manager, Unsinkable Youth

Maria is a dedicated mental health advocate, speaker, and educator specializing in mental health and addiction. At Unsinkable, she ensures that youth feel empowered, valued, and supported in their mental health journeys.

ASANTE HAUGHTON

Program Manager, Storytelling

Asante is an entrepreneur, activist, and mental health advocate who believes in the transformative power of storytelling. At Unsinkable, Asante is passionate about amplifying voices, fostering change, and creating inclusive spaces for shared experiences.

Relationship with CanadaHelps

As a recently CRA-registered charity, Unsinkable has been leveraging [CanadaHelps](#) for all its digital fundraising since 2023. CanadaHelps has made it easier for Unsinkable to grow its fundraising consistently, help supporters to contribute, and enhance donor communications and stewardship.

Work & Motivations

Unsinkable's core mission is to empower individuals on their mental health journeys by helping them discover and share their stories. The charity strongly believes in the power of storytelling to facilitate healing, reduce stigma, and promote peer-to-peer support.

Their initiatives span youth programs, community champions and collaborations,

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> *We want to intentionally use digital fundraising in a way that aligns with our mission and connects with people that we want to reach versus just trying to shout into the ether.*
>
> — Hailey H.,
> Executive Director

storytelling, and more—all aimed at creating a supportive space where individuals feel heard and valued.

For instance, with the Unsinkable Youth program, *"we want to make sure that they get their power back. And we do that by involving them in every decision we make—it's their program,"* shared Maria.

The team, composed of individuals with lived experience, ensures that programs and initiatives remain grounded and humanized. For instance, both Maria and Asante began their journey as Unsinkable storytellers.

Unsinkable has also brought on board members and advisors who are part of the community the team is trying to connect with.

"Service users talk about how important it is for them to feel humanized by the folks that are serving them. And a huge part of that is service providers—us—bringing that humanity to the table," shared Asante.

Having a feedback loop has helped ensure that the programs are intentional. The team encourages feedback from their community, including partners, stakeholders, and people accessing Unsinkable.

"In the fall of 2023, we started our strategic plan, and we did a lot of community engagement … just trying to get a better sense of what they identified as strengths and where they saw opportunities for us to grow and build," shared Hailey.

Unsinkable's Charity Profile Page on CanadaHelps, outlining their mission and impact

> Our big focus is on empowering people on their mental health journey to really explore and share their stories. We know that every story matters—not just for the person telling it, but for the people who hear it. There's so much healing in reflecting on your own experiences, just as there's power in the way stories bring people together, create connection, and help others feel seen and understood.
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> — Hailey H., Executive Director

Types of Fundraising Unsinkable Relies On

Unsinkable is focused on intentional fundraising, ensuring its partners and supporters are aligned with their core goals. Some fundraising activities include:

Corporate Partnerships & Foundations

Unsinkable has established corporate partnerships over the last few years, including collaborations with Sun Life, Good Life, and BDC. These partnerships provide crucial financial support and visibility.

They have also received support from family and community foundations that align with Unsinkable's mission, which helps sustain existing programs and fund new initiatives.

In-Kind Contributions

In-kind contributions have been a big positive for Unsinkable over the years. Contributions, for instance, hours of project management assistance, help the organization grow without incurring high costs and help gain access to expertise and resources that they may not have internally.

Digital Fundraising

Unsinkable has been leveraging CanadaHelps for all its digital fundraising since 2023 to grow its fundraising consistently, help supporters contribute, automate repetitive tasks, and enhance donor communications and stewardship.

With digital fundraising, they are also looking to see how they can better navigate this space as more charities look to engage donors.

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> *We've been really intentional. The approach we've looked at is how we invite folks—whether it's grants, corporate partners, or family foundations—to support the work that we know we want to bring to life. And how do we invite them to be part of that development process.*
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> — Hailey H., Executive Director

Fundraising Challenges Faced

As a relatively young organization, Unsinkable has encountered resource and fundraising challenges, including:

Limited access to resources to pilot new initiatives, despite clear demand from the communities they serve. Many of their ideas require financial backing, which is difficult to secure consistently.

Competing with numerous other charities for donor attention, particularly on high-profile fundraising days like Giving Tuesday or during Giving Season. With so many organizations vying for support, it becomes difficult to stand out and attract donors.

Balancing the need for consistent funding while staying true to their mission. They were looking to avoid constantly pursuing grants or partnerships that don't align with their core values.

Digital Fundraising with CanadaHelps

Unsinkable began using CanadaHelps to streamline its digital fundraising efforts and reduce its administrative burden.

With CanadaHelps, Unsinkable found a comprehensive solution that addressed their fundraising needs. The Customizable Donation Forms (CDFs), automated tax receipting and donor communications, and efficient donation processing and deposits have simplified their fundraising process.

USER-FRIENDLY DONATION FORMS

Unsinkable uses CanadaHelps' CDFs to enhance its digital fundraising strategy, making it easier for donors to contribute seamlessly. The linked CDF on their website form provides a seamless experience and helps donors complete their contributions swiftly.

The team appreciates how easy it was to design and implement these forms, complete with branding, automated thank you emails, and tax receipts, and being able to link the forms directly from their site to improve donor experience.

"It's a very intuitive platform," shared Hailey. *"In terms of increased usage that we've seen over the years, yes, I definitely think as we've used it more, we've seen more uptake, more so at certain points of the year."*

EFFICIENT TAX RECEIPTING & DONOR STEWARDSHIP

CanadaHelps' automated tax receipting and automated thank you's to donors have saved Unsinkable valuable time and resources. These have helped streamline administrative processes and enabled donor stewardship.

Additionally, Unsinkable appreciates the peace of mind that comes with the confidence that CanadaHelps' receipting is completely CRA-compliant and secure.

"We always encourage people to support through CanadaHelps because it's way more accessible and easier than us trying to get all these random donations from different places. It's consolidated, which is really helpful. As we continue to grow, we're looking at how we leverage that more intentionally and more effectively," shared Hailey.

EASE OF USE & REPORTING

The intuitive CanadaHelps interface has also made it simple for the team to manage their profile, update content, and track donations. CanadaHelps' donor insights and reporting tools allowed Unsinkable to access quick views as well as detailed reports about donations made.

"We find it good for tracking. Also, I like the fact that you can send thank you messages through it as well and acknowledge people right away. That's a great feature," shared Hailey.
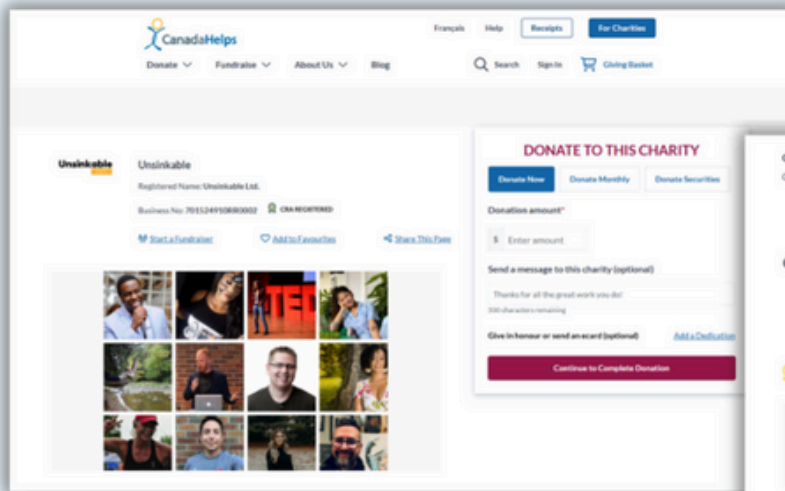
ENHANCED VISIBILITY

Unsinkable maximized its [CanadaHelps Charity Profile page](#) to further engage potential donors and showcase its impact. The ability to share compelling narratives has helped strengthen donor trust and engagement.

Their charity profile page currently highlights key programs: Unsinkable Youth, Storytelling, and Community Champions, as well as the Quebec program. They also showcase several videos and images from their storytellers, mission and goals, and the impact on the community.

COMPLIANCE & SECURITY

CanadaHelps' adherence to Canadian fundraising regulations ensures that Unsinkable remains compliant. As one of the only organizations that provide CRA-compliant tax receipts to donors, CanadaHelps provides both donors and the charity with easy access to these tax receipts during tax season as well.

INCREASE IN CREDIBILITY & TRUST

As a relatively new charity, being listed on CanadaHelps provided an added layer of trust and recognition for Unsinkable. It has made it easier for donors to find and support Unsinkable. Additionally, many donors were already familiar with CanadaHelps, which further helped establish legitimacy for Unsinkable.

Impact & Results

Since implementing CanadaHelps for their digital fundraising, Unsinkable has seen consistent growth in online donations as well as an impact on other facets of digital fundraising.

INCREASED DIGITAL DONATIONS

In the two years that Unsinkable has used the CanadaHelps platform for its digital fundraising, the team has seen a ~5% increase in donations year-over-year.

Specifically, they have seen increased fundraising around mental health awareness-related days and events. They successfully fundraise via CanadaHelps' platform and continue to enhance their fundraising strategies to drive even more impact.

Currently, digital fundraising accounts for 5% of their total fundraising.

~5% increase year-over-year in digital fundraising

0.25% reduction in transaction fees using embedded forms
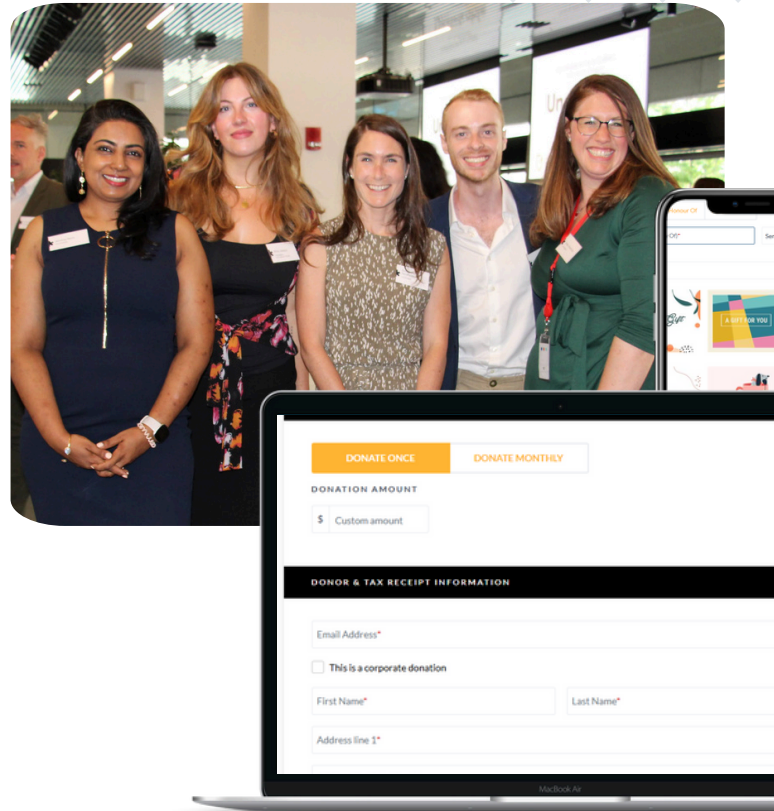
SAVING ON TRANSACTION FEES WITH LINKED FORMS

The ability to link the donation form directly from Unsinkable's website has helped enhance the user experience by offering a seamless and integrated process. Donors can contribute using the linked form with Unsinkable's branding, which helps donors get further familiarized with the charity, and the ease increases donor conversion rates.

This convenience has been crucial for retaining potential donors who might abandon a more cumbersome process. **Plus, with a linked form, Unsinkable saves 0.25% in transaction fees for every donation made through its website.**

LEVERAGING TARGETED CAMPAIGNS

Unsinkable outlines how impactful mission-aligned digital fundraising has been, including leveraging certain annual and seasonal campaigns. **For instance, the team has noticed increased donation activity during key awareness periods like Mental Health Week and World Mental Health Day.**

AUTOMATION & EFFICIENCY

Streamlined donation processing, automated thank you emails, and tax receipting have helped them connect with their donors, reduce manual workload, and ensure compliance with tax receipt requirements. The automation features have freed up staff resources for more mission-driven work.

"The fact that it auto-generates donations and receipts takes a lot of administrative work out of it rather than if somebody sends us a cheque and then we have to create a donation receipt and then to send it in the mail," shared Hailey.

STRONGER DONOR RELATIONSHIPS

By leveraging the platform's ability to send real-time acknowledgments and personalized thank-you messages to donors, Unsinkable has seen increased engagement and repeat contributions from supporters.

"The opportunity in real time to reach out to donors and know who they are and thank them for their support and keep them in the loop on what we're doing is great," shared Hailey. *"I think one of the reasons why we've used it is just because it is pretty simple. It's comprehensive. There are so many organizations represented there. It's easy to find us versus if we were using maybe a different platform that's not as well known."*

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> *Targeted campaigns have worked a lot when the focus is more on mental health. Like those special awareness days for mental health. I think people are more interested in supporting or we have seen more traction at those times. We also ran a Giving Tuesday, a kind of year-end giving campaign, this year, and we encouraged people to go to CanadaHelps. We definitely saw support there.*
>
> — Hailey H., Executive Director

Why Unsinkable Recommends CanadaHelps

Unsinkable strongly recommends CanadaHelps for charities looking to optimize their digital fundraising efforts. As a centralized platform for donations, its intuitive design, automation features, and credibility make it an essential tool for nonprofits of all sizes.

The ability to tell their story effectively, engage donors meaningfully, and streamline administrative processes has made a significant impact on their fundraising success.

As Hailey surmises, *"CanadaHelps has done a good job of showcasing itself as the premier online fundraising platform. If I say CanadaHelps, people know what I'm talking about. There's a level of credibility that it has. That is why we've used it because it's as easy to explain as it is to use."*

Want to be our next success story? **Request a Demo Here**.

Unsinkable's Long-Term Goals

Looking ahead, Unsinkable has a few major goals they are working towards.

New Programming to Share The Power of Storytelling

One primary goal has been to harness the power of storytelling to reach more people without the expectation that individuals have to share their stories publicly. This involves engaging with new communities and finding innovative ways to support individuals, including developing new programming.

"We know there's tons of evidence around the benefits of storytelling for your self-confidence, for reducing your self-stigma, for increasing your compassion towards yourself and your experiences," shared Hailey.

They are also exploring ways to connect with more people through cross-publications and collaborations with other organizations. For instance, here's a documentary born from a recent collaboration between Unsinkable and the Jane and Finch Center.

Strengthen Partnerships

Unsinkable's team is looking to continue amplifying and highlighting the work that other organizations are doing and working collaboratively with them.

For instance, they recently worked with eight mental health organizations in Québec and introduced the Unsinkable Québec program. *"We saw that as an opportunity, not only to tell those eight stories but as a chance to amplify the work that was happening on the ground in their community and for those organizations to now be able to take those stories and those videos and share it with their community and their funders,"* shared Hailey. Here's a look at the Unsinkable Quebec Video Series: *8 Stories of Hope.*

Bridging the Gap

The team continues to be focused on addressing critical gaps in the mental health system. This includes providing support for transitional-age youth and young caregivers.

Transitional-age youth, moving from adolescent to adult services, often fall into service gaps - Unsinkable aims to create meaningful interventions for them. Young caregivers frequently feel isolated when supporting family members with mental health challenges. Unsinkable is looking into caregiver groups led by those with lived experience, fostering meaningful and shared understanding.

By focusing on these underserved communities, Unsinkable is ensuring that no one has to navigate mental health challenges alone.

What Storytellers at Unsinkable Say About the Charity

As Asante shared, *"A huge strength of ours is that we're not trying to hoard stories. We're trying to amplify them. Of course, through our programming, we produce stories, but through partnerships, collaborations, community organizations, stakeholders, entrepreneurs, healthcare workers, and all the folks that we work with, we're trying to amplify stories as much as possible."*

> **Marfora, Unsinkable Youth Facilitator**

On how she would define the impact Unsinkable Youth has had on the community:

"Unsinkable Youth has had a significant impact by fostering a supportive environment where young people feel heard, valued, and equipped with tools to navigate their mental well-being. Through storytelling, mentorship, and peer support, the program has helped youth build connections, reduce stigma around mental health, and develop coping strategies."

> **Kanchan, Storyteller at Unsinkable**

On her experience of sharing her story with Unsinkable:

"It was not easy for me to share my story but I'm glad I was in the best space of my mind after ... When I shared it with a few people, as I was talking about support, those people were proud of me. And I think that's something I needed - people to be proud of, of me. That they appreciate what I shared is something that is going to help other people ... I was proud of myself to do that."

***Take a look at 'In My Words Series' with Re-Defined:
Kanchan Rathore's Story***

> **Mariela, Wellness Group Program Coordinator at Unsinkable Youth**

On what motivates her to be a part of Unsinkable Youth:

"Being part of Unsinkable Youth has been so rewarding. It has given me the opportunity to connect with people and support youth in their mental health journey. My passion for spreading awareness of mental health and advocating for others has been my number one motivator since joining the program. What also motivates me to be a part of it is how much I have been learning and continue to learn along the way."