

Berlin blog: Young entrepreneur Dana Parsons attends G20 alliance

What can N.L. businesses learn from the very latest digital trends?

By Dana Parsons, [for CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 16, 2017 7:00 PM NT Last Updated: Jun 16, 2017 7:00 PM NT

Holy cow! Or should I say "Heilige Kuh!" One day in Berlin and I've gained a world of knowledge.

I'm here at the [G20 Young Entrepreneurs Alliance](#) representing Canada. There are 500 young startup founders and entrepreneurs here from all over the globe to learn about the latest digital trends.

I'm grabbing some time to blog while Montreal's [Martin Dionne](#) speaks on a panel about artificial intelligence (entrepreneurs are nothing if not multitaskers.)

If you're technical or not, the world of digital is here, and you better pull your laces tight and embrace it or buy those self-lacing shoes a la "Back to the Future" (because you can already buy them in stores!)

The first big lesson of the summit came from fellow Canadian [Trent McConaghy](#), founder of the company [Big Chain DB](#). Two words: block, chain; combine them and you have the third wave of digital. If you have not heard of blockchain, it's not too late — get Googling.

According to Trent, the rise of blockchain is precipitated by the real need to decentralize data. Conglomerates like Facebook and Google will lose some of their power as each of us are empowered by blockchain to take back our data. Blockchain also allows for cryptocurrency or tokens that can be used as a form of currency; a viable alternative to traditional dollars and cents.

Room for all sizes

I made a new friend today, who is just four years old! His name is [Roby](#); he's a robot who is co-hosting the summit! He was created four years ago at the University of Berlin.

One take-away today that's particularly useful for Newfoundland and Labrador is just how collaborative big companies here in Germany are with smaller, tech startups. The dreams and passions of entrepreneurs are legit here in Berlin. A large company would rather try and fail, then miss a potential opportunity to collaborate.

Some of the companies we've seen participating in the Berlin startup scene are: Sony, T-Mobile, RealD 3D, Sky Sports etc. They see partnerships with startups as learning opportunities and are willing to take the collaborative leap — they don't even call it a risk.

Newfoundland companies have creativity and passion; it would be great to see them become collaborators with startups like the companies here in Berlin. Just five years ago, Berlin had no tech scene at all, now because of these collaborations, it's a global tech startup leader.

As one of 32 Canadians here at the G20 YEA Summit, I'm proud to be wearing a maple leaf. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau greeted the entire summit via video this morning; further proof that innovation and youth are key on his agenda.

The Canadian cohort is diverse, multi-lingual and equally male and female; a true representation of Canada as a nation — visibly, economically, as well as by industry. We also have a Toy Poodle in our delegation, so we are officially considered the coolest. While only half of the Canadian delegation is working in technology, all are interested in embracing the future of digital as we drive to diversify from resource to knowledge-based.

In the next blog post, I'll include information on the outcomes that G20 YEA aims for. Also, if you're a young entrepreneur or know one, I'll fill you in on how to apply to be a delegate next year in Argentina.

About Dana Parsons:

Dana Parsons is Venture Lead at Memorial University's Genesis Centre and VP of the startup Brownie Points Inc. A PMP® certificated project manager, she also leads Ladies Learning Code in Newfoundland and Labrador. This year, Dana was also invited to join 21inc's top 50 Innovators under 40 as a delegate from NL; she now remains active in the 21inc Alumni Network. She is also active in the Women In Technology peer group in the St. John's region. She has previously held positions as a Director for TEDxStJohns (2011-2015), Happy City St. John's (2013-2015), PMI NL Chapter (2014)

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