
150 Profiles: Michael Creek

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As we mark the 150th anniversary of confederation, The Philanthropist is profiling Canadians from across the non-profit sector and putting a face to 150 individuals who work or volunteer in Canada's social sector.



Name: Michael Creek

Profession (current role in the sector): Director of Strategic Initiatives at Working for Change

Years working and/or volunteering in the non-profit sector: 10 years

Can you describe a defining moment in your career working/volunteering in the non-profit sector?

The first few years of working in the non-profit sector at Working for Change were mainly filled with learning opportunities and I was so grateful just to be employed and not living in poverty. I do remember a defining moment that occurred at Toronto City Hall listening to men and women tell their stories of struggles with poverty and homelessness, violence against women and marginalization. We are often taught to listen but it was really the first time that I had experienced actually hearing someone else's story. The whole day I had that knot in my throat of pain, not my own pain: the pain that others feel and live with each day. It has had a profound impact both personally and professionally that we must work for change.

Describe your desk/workspace.

My desk is in a small cubicle in the centre of our office. My desk is organised into piles of papers of different projects, my phone is in the drawer to allow for extra space on the desk, and boxes fill the space under my desk. The window I look out to has a poster for "buying social" and a human rights poster, a flag of Ethiopia, a small elephant and a courage badge. To my right is another window that has a shelf that runs its length filled with knick knacks and buttons, etc. On my left is a wall that has a painting and some awards and paintings of Voices from the Street.

What are you reading (website, book, Twitter feed, etc.) that has expanded your understanding of the non-profit sector?

I try to stay active on Facebook and Twitter. Both are important tools for the non-profit sector. I'm reading a fantastic book on curiosity, *The Secret to a Bigger Life, Curious Mind*, by Brian Grazer. By increasing our understanding of the non-profit sector we should be much more curious in our relationships with each other.

As a past author with the journal, please select an article you wrote for us and share your reflections, reaction or thoughts about what has changed and/or stayed the same?

[*End of Poverty: A Survivor's Journal*, 2016](#)

I'm an optimist by nature and believe that we together can end poverty and homelessness. I believe in the power of the narrative, that it tells a story in a way that more formal research cannot capture in statistics. Great social change rarely comes out of research, but comes from a movement of like-minded people who want to ensure that basic human rights belong to us all. I get to experience the joy of others finding their path out of poverty! I get to see homeless people find a forever home! I get to see people who have been beaten down by a system that sucks the life out of them, that steals dreams and aspirations. I get to see hope restored with understanding, opportunity and choice.

When I reflect on the article, I still think that governments want to end poverty and homelessness and that government members and ministers feel that these are basic human rights. How do we convince them that it will take their personal courage and their commitment to a rights based approach?

As my country Canada is turning 150, I'm drawn to the decency I see all around me. Canadians know that change is only harder when we ignore the fact that social and economic rights are just as important as any of the rights spelled out in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Yes, 2017 will be a great year with Canadians coming together to celebrate 150 years with entertainment, parties, new buildings etc. Let's celebrate the fact that we can do better for each other. That we are drawn together not just by the land and water and borders but by rights and responsibility to each other.

As we move forward together let's take stock of how far we have come and what the prize is at the end. Our sector, the non-profit sector, leads the way to a better tomorrow. Let our organizations reflect the diversity around us. Let's ensure that our organizations are committed to lifting people up. That's worth a celebration.

Do you know someone we should profile as part of this series? Email us at philanthropistprofiles@gmail.com