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150 Profiles: Maggie Hodge Kwan

By Maggie Hodge Kwan

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: Maggie Hodge Kwan

Current role in the sector: Planning, metrics, and evaluation consultant

Years working and/or volunteering in the nonprofit sector: 13 years.



What was your first job in the sector or a defining moment?

I spent my teens and early twenties working adjacent to non-profits. Much of that time was in a public library, some was in a childcare centre in the basement of a women's shelter. Every day, I interacted with people who were in temporary or permanent transience. In whatever way I could, I supported—helping library patrons access the services they needed or navigate online social services, providing quality care to babies and children whose mothers were fleeing abuse. Both experiences taught me that while there is caring help for vulnerable populations, the offerings can be redundant, gaps are great, and the system is chaotic.

Describe your desk/workspace.

Since I work from home, I turned a spare bedroom into an office. This is fairly essential, as being able to close the door helps me to maintain balance between my work life and my non-work life. I have a purposefully small desk, which keeps me from being a Post-It hoarder (my birthright!). I subscribe to the Marie Kondo method of filing paper vertically instead of horizontally, which stops me from keeping every piece of paper ever. Finally, a corkboard hangs above my desk and a paper monthly and weekly

calendar are tacked up. It's old school, but I love crossing to-dos off my list with a Sharpie.

What are you reading or following that has expanded your understanding of the non-profit sector?

- I read [NonprofitAF](#) on a weekly basis. Vu is so effective because he's able to be both practical and entertaining when getting his point across.
- [Nonprofit Quarterly](#) publishes a number of short articles about the sector in a daily newsletter that is well worth subscribing to.
- The [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#) is another regular read and I admire their willingness to critique and push trends in the sector.
- I love reading outside of the sector and pondering how information may apply to non-profits. Two recent favorites include *The Best American Infographics of 2016* by Gareth Cook and Robert Krulwich and *Non-Obvious 2017: How to Think Different, Curate Ideas & Predict the Future* by Rohit Bhargava.

What do you think our sector needs to be thinking about?

I work with both non-profits and funders and have witnessed funders become increasingly enthusiastic about data while nonprofits have decried bean counters and wondered how numbers can represent the complex causes that nonprofits support. I understand both sides and would love to see both funders and nonprofits embrace ongoing, mixed methods evaluation that balances the qualitative and quantitative aspects of this work.

There's also tremendous potential for nonprofits to put systems in place to harvest and take data-informed action regularly. Forget big data—it would be great to see nonprofits make use of their own data and the data ecosystems surrounding them.

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