
150 Profiles: Amrita Kumar-Ratta

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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: Amrita Kumar-Ratta

Current role in the sector: Project Lead—Diversity and Inclusion Charter of Peel, Regional Diversity Roundtable

Years working and/or volunteering in the non-profit sector: 15 years.



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

One of my defining moments was the summer I worked as a Research Analyst at the United Nations Development Program Asia-Pacific Regional Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. Prior to this experience I had worked mainly in small NGOs and mid-size research centres in Canada and elsewhere and this was my first experience working in such a large institution, in a department governing systems of practice around gender equity across 36 country offices in Asia and the Pacific. I quickly learned from this experience that the non-profit sector is not effective on its own, nor can large public institutions create any sustainable social change without the hard work and commitment of organizations on the ground. This experience has shaped the way I engage with stakeholders across sectors and the way I view collaboration, community building and collective impact.

Describe your desk/workspace.

I feel that those of us in the non-profit sector are consistently balancing between what we feel our ideal work environments should be, and acknowledging the limited resources we have for investments in our workspaces. I enjoy a space that allows for a creative mixture of collaboration and independent work. My workspace has a number of personal touches—artwork, event brochures, sayings that motivate and inspire me - in addition to a number of books and articles I've picked up over the years, and a collage of work plans and visuals of the tasks that I am working on. I even enjoy a personal calendar and a small whiteboard with space to doodle when I need a pick-me-up.

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

There is a lot of good reading material out there. The Ontario Nonprofit Network offers a good foundation of reading material around policy issues and priorities in the non-profit sector. Additionally, the Tamarack Institute has some great material on community development and engagement, collective impact, and collaborative leadership. I have also get a lot from browsing the Ontario Human Rights Commission's website, where there is some useful material around how actors in the non-profit sector can and have put certain ideas and policies around equity and social justice into practice at work and in the larger community.

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

Right now I think what matters to me most with regards to the non-profit sector is encouraging diverse leadership as well as cultivating decent work environments. I believe we are better able to contribute to positive change in our communities and our social systems when we work in healthy, flexible and collaborative environments, when we are encouraged to keep balance in our lives, when we are treated fairly and compensated equally, when our diverse credentials are recognized, and when our lived experience as diverse individuals is valued.

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