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Author: Mena Gainpaulsingh

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By Mena Gainpaulsingh

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: Mena Gainpaulsingh

Current role in the sector: CEO, Purposeful Fundraising; President-Elect, AFP Ottawa; Steering Committee Member, Prime Ministers' Row

Years working and/or volunteering in the non-profit sector: 19 years



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

My first job in the sector was with a capital campaign for a rehabilitation centre for survivors of torture. One moment that stands out was the first time I heard the founder of the organization, Dr. Helen

Bamber, speak about her work with torture survivors. I learned that these men, women and children really had nowhere else to go for the support necessary to overcome some of the most horrific experiences imaginable. Through her powerful words I knew that this organization just had to exist, and that fundraising was essential to the organization's survival. I knew I had chosen the right career, where I could make a contribution towards ensuring that those who are living in very difficult circumstances get the support needed.

Describe your desk/workspace.

I try to keep it clear as possible so that I can focus on the task at hand. My health guru friend would like me to say that I always have bottle of water on my desk, but I have to confess it's mostly coffee.

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

The first fundraising book I ever read was *Successful Fundraising*, written by my boss at the time, Dr John Baguley. It was wonderful to work with such an accomplished fundraiser and the book helped give me an excellent grounding in fundraising. Now most of my reading tends to be what catches my eye on LinkedIn and Twitter. I mostly read blog posts that focus on strategy, and I love reading examples from other fundraisers of what has worked and not worked in the industry. Blogs I follow include Hilborn's charity e-news and the Association of Fundraising Professionals' e-wire magazine. I also stay in touch with the UK fundraising environment via UK Fundraising. Having more of an international perspective helps to broaden my knowledge and bring new ideas and innovation to my work here in Canada.

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

How organizations can engage their donors better. Charities in Canada, and across the world, are doing amazing things. These things just wouldn't happen without their supporters. Charities, and the philanthropists behind them, are literally improving and saving lives! But I think most charities could be better at telling stories about their impact, and keeping donors in the loop as we go about making the world a better place.

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