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150 Profiles: Mélanie Demers

By Mélanie Demers

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: Mélanie Demers

Current role in the sector: Artistic and General Director of MAYDAY/Mélanie Demers, a dance company based in Montreal, Quebec.

Melanie Demers profile picture

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

I created my dance company, MAYDAY, in 2007. I had no idea what I was getting into. Since then, I lost my temper. I lost countless important documents, forms, papers. I lost my innocence. I lost time. I (sometimes) lost my credibility. I lost opportunities. I lost weight. I lost sleep. I lost loved ones. I lost keys. But I gained confidence. I gained creative impact. I gained empathy, understanding and humour. You have to have a positive vibe to get through the challenges that life, in this sector, brings you.

Describe your desk/workspace.

Kitchen table. Tea cup (or alternatively a glass of wine). Countless books. Dictionaries (I still love dictionaries). A list of things to do. Bills. Computer. Art magazines. Cell phone. Euros. Pennies. World map. Cookies.

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

So much work to do. I am not reading about the sector. I am creating the sector. Complaining with my colleagues is where I learn that we all struggle with the same challenges.

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

Sustainability. The amount of work that needs to be done by one person to make a non-profit art organization work is unreal. People are literally playing with their physical and mental health, romantic and family lives and are dangerously pawning their passion. But dance is infectious. I need it in my life to the point where I can invest everything I have to make it happen.

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