
150 Profiles: Patricia Thomson

As a way to mark the 150th anniversary of confederation, The Philanthropist [profiled Canadians](#) from across the non-profit sector and put a face to 150 individuals who work or volunteer in Canada's social sector. As 2017 drew to a close, we published our final profile of 2017 -- reaching our target of speaking with 150 people! The Philanthropist recognizes that Canada's history did not begin 150 years ago. And it will continue beyond 150 years. In this spirit, we will continue to profile people in the non-profit sector throughout 2018.

Name: Patricia Thomson

Current role in the sector: Executive Director, Stanley Park Ecology Society

Years working and/or volunteering in the non-profit sector: 14 years in my current role, 21 in the non-profit sector.

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

After working for provincial and federal parks for numerous summers during university, I was ready to try the non-profit realm. I signed up to volunteer with the Vancouver Aquarium, and for two months I was in my glory contributing within a great diversity of opportunities. I also got to know and be known by the staff, and when a short-term posting opened up, I was in the right place and time. Within two years, I was the manager of public education, and for seven years, I fostered my own dynamic team of 100 volunteers.

Describe your desk/workspace.

My workspace in the upper floors of the historic Stanley Park Dining Pavilion is humble and full! I prefer having an old style desk on thin legs, so I can store many boxes of brochures, buttons, cards and other swag that support development initiatives. As long as it is not windy when someone opens the large windows that overlook Stanley Park's forest and gardens, I know where and what each pile is and means, and how each reminds and prioritizes me. I am excited to have a second computer monitor, and promise myself that I'll have a stand-up desk soon!

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

Appreciatively, I was introduced to a listserv of dynamic women executive directors who span non-profit enterprises across Metro Vancouver and who often gather for breakfast chats. We query and answer each other on a wealth of practical issues, suggestions, and support each other with everything from policy to income raising, job postings, and management tools. I delve into these communications like a bowl of trail mix, knowing that there is sweet energy in the common experiences, challenges and successes shared.

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

Across many sectors and many years, I have seen too many examples of non-profits that end

up competing against each other for HR and development resources and relationships. Limited grants can set us up for elbowing our way for awareness and prioritization. Creative collaboration, however, is where we need to support, strengthen, and stretch our skills, our programs, our opportunities, and our successes. I'm very proud of the mission statement that steers my current role: Collaborative leadership in environmental education, conservation and research in Stanley Park.

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