

## Gary Sealey



When it comes to “pink” philanthropy, it’s easy to take a grant, well—for granted. Just ask Gary Sealey, who in 2010 celebrates 25 years as founder and President at Canada’s *Lambda Foundation*.

“There is an opportunity for all of us,” Sealey comments, “to take a deep breath and ask the questions, ‘Where am I? What is happening? What is my role in my time?’ We have the chance to work together on differences that we can all actually celebrate.”

A professional historian and certified forestry technician, Sealey is no stranger to getting behind a cause. Amidst a broad range of national and international activities, he has been an activist at the UN, a pillar for Ottawa’s sport and recreation group *Club Moustache* (Time Out), and a loud voice behind both the *Global Network on Food Security* and *Friends of the Earth*. Yet, as Sealey notes, volunteering for a GLBTQ organization reaps particularly unique rewards.

“For those of us who lived through official repression as social outsiders,” Sealey observes, “life as a volunteer has special meaning. Volunteering gives a platform for being seen, and of being heard. It is a path to

being part of the community, of exercising your rights as a citizen, of envisioning a better world, of making choices together, and of building something better.”

Back in 1984, Sealey set up the *Lambda Foundation* as a public gift from the Lambda Business and Professional Club. As he recalls, it was a professional club of businesspeople who wanted to make a difference for future generations—with the money to back it up. As Sealey adds, “We did it for fun and as a gift, because it hadn’t been done before, to build a bridge to our own quiet and endangered society—to build a better Canada.” Still not uncommon with a start-up gay and lesbian charity in Canada, it took *Lambda* seven years to be recognized as such by Revenue Canada’s Charities Division. And that was a battle Sealey and his colleagues were willing to fight.

**“...life as a volunteer has special meaning. Volunteering gives a platform for being seen, and of being heard. It is a path to being part of the community, of exercising your rights as a citizen, of envisioning a better world, of making choices together, and of building something better.”**

Time heals some wounds. To date, *Lambda* has raised a quarter of a million dollars for university awards from coast-to-coast, funding authors of pivotal new work as well as research projects that advance educational awareness on queer culture in Canada. While a generation leaves *Lambda* gifts in their wills, current grants and awards have funded everything from the “Queer Lexicography” to reports like “Bias and discrimination within the immigration process.” More recently, *Lambda* established a medical scholarship in the name of Dr. Gary Gibson.

“Gibson was one of the first doctors to come out in Southern Ontario,” Sealey notes, “and whose idea was that we’re here to help everyone. There is another generation of people who have said, ‘It may be awhile, but I’ve put a *Lambda* scholarship in my will.’ You and I may not see that, but it’s a commitment.”

As *Lambda* turns 25 this year, it aims to partner with a minimum of 20 universities and colleges across the country to provide awards. Reporting to a national board of directors, Sealey notes that that’s merely one of many forks in the road ahead.

“There are three challenges at *Lambda* that come to mind,” reports Sealey. “One is resources, and another is difficulties with getting volunteers because we’re all too busy to make that conscious commitment to volunteer groups. The third is that groups need young people so they don’t simply become that ‘founding generation,’ especially when there’s still plenty to be done.”

When you’re a homeowner with a motorcycle, canoe and a 20-pound dog named Clarity you find your own ways to unwind. A true nature-lover, Sealey credits his environmental activism to his years as a technician in historic Canadian parks, where he observed foresters and their methods first hand. Sealey never has to look very far, however, to see a continued need for his ‘queerer’ activism, shuffling his time at *Lambda* with assisting queer youth at *Club Moustache* where young queer athletes can feel safer and part of a more inclusive experience.

“The community we know is much more diverse than before,” Sealey notes, “just look at the letters ‘L-Q-B-T-T-Q’ that keep growing. *Lambda* scholarships are stitched into a national series coast to coast, but there are several [potential] educational institutions across Canada. We want to help them, but also to show them off, that the people of their community are valued as Canadians and as sources of inspirations.”

**For more information or to help support *Lambda*, visit [lambdafoundation.com](http://lambdafoundation.com). 0**

### Take us to your leader!

We want to hear from you about the individual in your region—whether artist or activist, local merchant, or behind-the-scenes volunteer—who most contributes to Canada’s LGBTQ communities.

Send your nod to [trailblazers@outlooks.ca](mailto:trailblazers@outlooks.ca) and let us know why **your** hero is a hero for us all!