

Chapter Activist Profile

Tracy Frohlick and Tara Seucharan, Toronto, Ontario

Recently re-established, the Toronto, Ontario chapter has been building support in the community by working with some key local groups like the Clean Train Coalition and by maintaining a highly visible presence by tabling at the many events across the city. Tracy Frohlick and Tara Seucharan are busy activists with the chapter. Last fall they became co-contacts for chapter activities.

What motivated you to get involved with the Toronto chapter?

TARA: I saw the film *FLOW* in 2008 and learned about the Council's efforts to promote water as a human right. I was also impressed with the Council's ability to create real change through community empowerment and by affecting national policy. It's great to feel actively involved and not just a faceless member of a larger organization.

TRACY: When I found the Council of Canadians it felt like the exact type of organization I was looking for. I started out by getting involved in the food and water campaigns, and became the Education Coordinator for our chapter. A year later, I've found I love learning about trade issues, and see it as the great connector within all of the campaigns. Trade affects everything, and everything affects trade.

Why do you think that it is important to have a Council chapter in Toronto and what does it bring to the activist community?

TRACY: I think it is important that any large city have a chapter because there tends to be apathy in large centres, with everyone assuming someone else will fight the good fight. We have so many amazing groups all working really hard on a specific issue, but not always dealing with other related issues, or making the connections with other groups. Because we [the Council] have many campaign areas, we are able to link seemingly separate issues together, and hopefully make a far greater impact.

What has been a successful event for the chapter?

TARA: We've got a very active water campaign, so our water-related events have been our strongest. Last July we screened *Agua Mi Sangre*, a documentary against the privatization of water systems.

TRACY: Our first big event this year is a water forum in March that brought together the various groups that are working on water quality issues in the Greater Toronto Area. I hope that our other campaigns will be as well organized, and have created as much of a presence within the community a year from now.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to new chapters starting up?

TRACY: Talk to as many other chapters as you can to find out what works for them. Each chapter runs so differently, but it will give you an idea of how chapters organize. Attend the regional meeting and the Council's AGM as a way to get a feel for how everything works and as a great way to network with other chapter activists. Table at local events as much as you can to build your database of members. Make sure you stay on top of your database, and have more than one person in charge of managing it. Also, I'd highly recommend having both a contact and co-contact so that the work can be shared. In addition, set up a Facebook page and invite the other chapters to join, and start a blog or create a website to give you a Web presence.

This summer, Toronto will be a hub of activism; can you tell me a little of the plans the chapter has?



Tracy Frohlick and Tara Seucharan (on left) are co-contacts for recently revitalized Toronto chapter. With other chapter members, they have been working in coalition with other organizations and recently held a 2010 Water Forum to raise awareness about water issues.

TRACY: As the host chapter for the G20, we will be participating in actions that call for the decisions of our elected leaders to make our economy more fair and democratic. We will be participating in the People's Summit June 18 to 20.

Anything else you would like to add?

TARA: I'm grateful that we have a real camaraderie within our group. Everything we've achieved would have been extremely difficult otherwise — if not outright impossible — without this. Our chapter wouldn't be as dynamic as it is today without the work of our core team, the other members being Lisa Mantia, Michael Brothers and John Barber. I'd also like to thank our regional organizer, Mark Calzavara, who has been very supportive of our efforts.



For more information about how to join a chapter in your area, visit our website at www.canadians.org or call us at 1-800-387-7177.