
SARA L. AUSTIN

Champion for Children

Sara is a world class champion for children, with 20 years of global and Canadian experience in the charitable sector. She was recently appointed CEO of the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre. As the Founder and Lead Director of the Board for Children First Canada, Sara continues to lead a national movement to make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up.



You'll find her name on several "most powerful" lists; she was awarded the prestigious Top 25 Women of Influence and is a three-time winner of the Top 100 Most Powerful Women – and for good reason. She has led national and global advocacy campaigns, shaped major public policy efforts, and launched philanthropic campaigns. She has learned multiple languages, and is fluent in the parlance of diplomacy. Her work has taken her into the top circles of power in the United Nations, national governments, and boardrooms around the world.

In her previous role as the Director of the President's Office of World Vision Canada, Sara was the chief advisor to the President and Board of Directors; she also led strategic initiatives for the wellbeing of children and advanced workplace equity, diversity and inclusion. Sara has also been a Lecturer in Child Rights at Mount Royal University.

Sara has helped change the lives of the world's most vulnerable children. Her leadership of a global campaign to strengthen international laws resulted in the UN General Assembly adopting groundbreaking legislation which allows children or their advocates to file complaints against their government for violations of their rights. She drafted the protocol during her graduate studies at Oxford, and her efforts culminated in April 2014, when Sara delivered a speech at the UN Headquarters as the law went into effect.

She has also shaped Canadian public policy efforts, including testifying before Senate and Parliamentary Committees. In addition, Sara has led innovative programs on birth registration in Latin America and cutting edge research on girls' vulnerability to AIDS in Africa. In 2015, Sara broke new ground by launching *Strong Women, Strong World*, a campaign to empower women and girls.

As a regular contributor to mainstream and social media, Sara shapes public opinion on issues relating to the protection of women and children's human rights. Sara's Opinion Editorials have been published in leading newspapers and she has been interviewed on TV and radio networks such as CTV and CBC.

As an expert in good governance, Sara currently serves on the Board of Dalhousie University's Alumni Association and the Advisory Board of the Women's Executive Network (WXN). She previously served on Dalhousie's Board of Governors, Imagine Canada's Standards Council, the UN Advisory Council on Violence Against Children, and as Vice Chair for the Board of York Region Children's Aid Society. Sara was named a member of the Diversity 50 by the Canadian Board Diversity Council.

Sara holds an MSt/LLM with Distinction in International Human Rights Law, and a First Class Honours BA in International Development and Women's Studies from Dalhousie University. Sara has completed the Governance Essentials Program for Non-Profits with the Institute of Corporate Directors, the Maytree Foundation's Certificate in Public Policy Influence, and the University of Alberta's Indigenous Partnerships Program.

On a personal level, Sara is married and has a son; she is also a cancer survivor. She is an avid skier and sailor, and has travelled to over 40 countries. Sara's quiet determination to be a force for good in this world is an inspiration to those around her.