

Unstoppable

A partnerships expert gathers, listens, plans, and helps enact equitable policy

by Marisa Procopio



SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT HEAD OF PARTNERSHIPS, CROSS GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS, AND 2025 YORK HOUSE SCHOOL ALUM SPECIAL ACHIEVER AWARD WINNER VICKY LOPEZ MBE '96 PROMOTES COMMUNITY AND INCLUSIVITY

“I work in a team of 200 people in communications in the Government. For a long time, I was the only person of colour. Confidence, speaking up, and being able to have an opposing opinion is something you learned at York House School. To believe in yourself and in what you’re saying. If you have the evidence to back it up, if you’ve really listened to people and have an argument, then stick to it.”

Vicky Lopez, a Yorkie since kindergarten (“a lifer,” she smiles), developed her splendid gumption as she eagerly sampled a broad swath of school opportunities—Class President, basketball, netball, athletics officiating, Blackwatch, Jazz Band, and orchestra.

“I think I tried to do everything,” she says. “I learned to speak French before I even learned to speak Filipino; my family is from the Philippines.

“It was pretty idyllic to be at York House, to spend my whole life with the same friends—the same ones I have now,” continues Lopez. “The parents of my York House friends often took care of me. Any time I go back to Canada, they’re still the people I see. It wasn’t just a school; it was a whole support system and community that I was privileged to be a part of.”

Lopez remembers the school as a place where any dream was both legitimate and achievable, and where the teachers were ready to help students see them through. While at York House, she set her sights on becoming an astronaut and dove into astrophysics. After an immersive experience at Space Academy, she told her science teacher, Michael Simmonds, that she wanted to design a lunar rover vehicle.

And she remembers his response: “Okay, we could do it after class.’ He helped me with my application. Those influences and relationships really helped shape the kind of person I wanted to become. It came from having the courage to do whatever I felt like I wanted to do—that there wasn’t really anything stopping me.”

Astrophysics didn’t turn out to be the right fit for Lopez, but the technical and communications skills she gained within the discipline translated beautifully into her chosen work in marketing and advertising. In her partnerships role with the Scottish Government, she advocates for disparate groups across the country and builds strategic messaging that endeavors to reach, and benefit, all its citizens.

“The world is in a really difficult place,” she says. “I work on community cohesion, parental employability, financial support, cost of living, [and] preventative healthcare. I head up partnerships across all the different campaigns we do, making sure no one is left behind, and getting key messaging

across to help them live happier, healthier, safer lives.”

Building and executing policies based on the perspectives of as many citizens as possible is an especially fraught topic in today’s world. But to Lopez, choosing to prioritize the needs of all the people she serves isn’t just kind or generous—it’s also smart business.

“Inclusivity brings a voice to everyone, ideally,” she says. “And those voices, collectively, make for better experiences. I do a lot of workshops on inclusive communications across Scotland, talking about what inclusivity means and what I think we should be doing. I show examples of how we can do that and what should be expected. It shouldn’t be an afterthought; it should really be at the beginning of any strategic plan and policy.


“If you employ people and they’re not heard,” says Lopez, “you’re really missing out.”

York House School’s emphasis on developing boldness, self-determination, and keen listening and observation skills in its students continues to guide Lopez and benefits her colleagues and constituents. And the relationships she cultivated at the school were an exceptional model for how to get things done—and done well.

“I learned from the incredibly intelligent people around me at York House,” she says. “You could learn at every step from anyone and everything around you. It’s quite humbling to be in such an environment. I try to make sure

that I remember that. And from a partnerships perspective, I get to be in the room with many people I can learn from. The challenge is to get that, take what I’m learning, and share it with others.”

Her efforts to promote inclusivity and build strong communities have garnered meaningful recognition. In his 2024 New Year Honours list, His Majesty the King announced that Lopez would be awarded the Member of the British Empire (MBE) for services to Minority Ethnic Communities in Scotland. She was honoured at a royal ceremony that April, and in 2025, she received the 2025 York House School Alum Special Achiever Award.



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It’s a striking notion, thinking back to a young woman of colour at a new position in the Scottish Government, surrounded by dozens of colleagues who didn’t look like her, having a divergent point of view on a topic, and summoning the courage to speak her mind. How was she able to do this?

“I was taught that was okay,” she smiles. “The confidence I had from York House to try things, and just the feeling that I could do absolutely anything, was pivotal.” 🌀