

#SenecaProud Alumni Featured: Bai Bunpanya - GM of Toronto's King Blue Hotel

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HOTELIER: BAI BUNPANYA, TORONTO'S KING BLUE HOTEL

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The role of GM may be all encompassing, but for Bai Bunpanya, GM of Toronto's King Blue Hotel, his mission is laser focused: "Foster an environment where the best aspects of humanity can thrive. The goal is to create a workplace where kindness, compassion and empathy become the driving force behind decisions, and become part of the fabric of our culture and the basis for how we treat our guests and, more importantly, our employees." The 40-something native of Bangkok, Thailand, is committed to the development of those around him through transparency and empowerment.

Bunpanya's love of hospitality was imbued in him from a young age. "Thai people have a reputation of being very hospitable. I've learned to be welcoming, accepting, respectful and hospitable towards everyone I come across. Growing up in a heavily influenced Buddhist society has taught me to strive to be sincere, genuine, humble and develop a strong belief in the concept of karma."

It was during his time at York University, where he studied Political Science, that Bunpanya had his first exposure to hospitality through a part-time job as a server/bartender. "I fell in love with being able to make human connections and make an immediate positive impact in people's lives (as opposed to the red-tape in politics)."

Upon graduation, he worked as a server at the Delta Hotel across the street from Seneca College where he continued his studies in Hospitality Management. "I worked my way up and became a GM of the hotel shortly after graduation. I had a goal of becoming a hotel GM by the age of 30, and within five years of working my first hotel job as a server, I became a GM

at the age of 27.” These days Bunpanya leads a team of 100 at the 118-room King Blue Hotel, situated in Toronto’s Entertainment district. He’s currently immersed in re-branding the Northland Properties-owned hotel into a Sutton Place Hotel.

As part of the re-branding, the hotel lobby is undergoing renovations that will see the addition of a Mediterranean restaurant, Abrielle, operated by Ascari Hospitality Group. Abrielle will showcase vegetable-forward plates from sun-kissed and sea-sprayed regions with bright flavours as well as outstanding cocktails. The hotel’s almost-new guestrooms are also receiving cosmetic updates ahead of the re-branding, scheduled for late 2023.

Bunpanya looks forward to making the Sutton Place Hotel a timeless, prominent figure on Toronto’s hotel landscape. “I want the brand to offer refined service that is approachable and inclusive a place where guests and employees alike feel comfortable in their own skin; that thrives on genuine human connection, not trendy, hip, pretentious, or patronizing; a place free of judgement where nobody has to try to fit in to be treated like a human being.”