

Women of Influence
NANAIMO

WIN
Network TM

2024

Award Nominees

"When we influence as a collective, we WIN"

The WIN Awards is an inclusive platform geared to support and celebrate the power of being influential. Women, non-binary, 2-spirit, and gender-diverse people all over Nanaimo are impacting the world in positive and revolutionary ways. They are mothers, parents, leaders, entrepreneurs, business owners, creators, STEM pioneers, activists, artists, tradespeople, philanthropists, and so much more. Our goal is to normalize the perception of people in these roles by championing what they do, who they are, and their character rather than the gender they identify with. Inclusion lies in the contrast between a sense of belonging and the pressure for people to "fit in" to groups, communities, or cultures.

CONGRATULATIONS

Kaitlin Goodman, honored nominee for the Youth Resiliency Award, serves as the Recreation Therapist at Nanaimo Seniors Village. Drawing inspiration from her mother, who also pursued a career in recreation therapy with older adults, Kaitlin is dedicated to providing meaningful engagements and breaking down barriers through recreation and leisure for the elderly. Beyond the misconception that her role revolves around bingo, Kaitlin is fervently committed to advocating for older adults in care to pursue their leisure activities.

In her leisure time, Kaitlin enjoys various activities such as yoga, walks in nature, crocheting, playing with her cat, watching television, and engaging in video games.



Angela Waldick - Angela's Journey: A Life Behind the Camera

At the tender age of nine, Angela's passion for photography was ignited by her grandfather, who gifted her with a camera and taught her how to develop film. This sparked a lifelong love of capturing the fleeting moments that make life so special.

Throughout her life, Angela found solace in photography and art during difficult times, including navigating separated households and bullying. Her journey has been one of overcoming numerous obstacles, heartbreak, and loss to arrive at where she stands today. As a single mother of a son and daughter, Angela faced challenges in finding employment due to her responsibilities as a parent. This led her to create her own photography business, with the support of her community.

However, tragedy struck when a household accident damaged her optic nerve and left her legally blind, putting her photography career in jeopardy. But with the help of a community of blind photographers and the use of technology, Angela overcame this obstacle and continued to pursue her passion and livelihood. Despite facing other health challenges, such as long COVID, Angela remains committed to learning and growing. She donates her time and energy to various non-profit organizations, mostly focused on food and child welfare, to help her local community.

She credits her success to the incredible people she is surrounded by, emphasizing the importance of community in achieving one's goals no matter the challenges they face.



Ashley Macfarlane

Ashley believes in leaving everything better than she found it. Mom of 3 boys - wife to a firefighter. Ashley works in healthcare at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital where she spent the most time during COVID-19 picking up as many extra shifts as she could to ensure all of her patients received their life saving treatment and her unit didn't have to suffer through with critical staffing levels.

During Covid she took on the role of volunteering her time off shift as the Vice chair of the hospital employee's union Nanaimo local to advocate for union members that were colleagues and friends as well as advocate for the safety of her patients. She organized a third world medical supply collection in her unit to send unusable but still good medical supplies to dirt floor hospitals in third world countries. Ashley volunteers as the Chair of the young workers

committee for hospital employees where she advocates for and educates young workers in healthcare of their rights on the job. Ashley often volunteers her time after hours to plan and organize events for her patients.

Delegate for the labour council, organizes yearly inter departmental toy drives for the paediatrics department and has volunteered for the Nanaimo & district hospital foundation. While she is very proud of all of that she is most proud to be a Canadian blood services ambassador, blood donor, registered organ donor & registered stem cell donor.

Louise Wilkinson:

Louise, a recent settler to Vancouver Island, has worked in various STEM fields for over 20 years, and has seen first-hand the need for more diversity within those industries. Never someone to shy away from a challenge, Louise has worked to break down barriers for herself and other under-represented groups at the local, region and national levels with her volunteer work. Passionate about making impactful change she has helped nudge the needle forward on gender equity through her work to expand mentoring networks for women in STEM, creating a STEM diversity champions toolkit, and creating community through partnerships and collaboration. She is a strong, thoughtful and inclusive business leader with a track record for finding solutions and creating change.



Rachel Robertson is the owner of Return to Form - Kinesiology & Pilates. Rachel is passionate about helping people recover from injuries and her motto is Get Stronger, Move Well, Without Pain. She implements her Pilates training into exercise prescription to reach these goals. She also is a Balanced Body educator for Core Align. She is a member of the Rotary Club of Lantzville, where she organizes Fitness in the Park, their club fundraiser. This year the event raised funds for a mental wellness trail in Lantzville. Rachel also enjoys teaching RecSkate for the City of Nanaimo as it is a pleasure to teach kids something that was a long time passion growing up. She is a proud mom of her 4 year old daughter, Charlotte and 10 month old daughter Annike-Rose. With her husband, Solomon Macys, they run the Nanaimo

Kettlebell Club and have competed nationally and internally, representing Canada at the 2015 and 2017 Worlds. Rachel won 2 Golds in South Korea and was nominated Female Athlete of the Year in Nanaimo in 2017. This year they are excited to host Canadian Kettlebell Nationals here in March.



Sandy Parise is the Executive Assistant at Eden Gardens, a long-term care home in Nanaimo with 130 residents, specializing in those living with dementia. Driven by a passion for helping others, this multi-faceted position allows her many opportunities to cultivate the impactful relationships that are necessary in the performance of her job. Her flexible manner ensures she is able to succeed in the fast-paced environment of today's healthcare system, as she takes on new challenges.

Leading with an unwavering earnest, Sandy partners with the care team, families, and members within our community to grow awareness of the Eden Gardens mission, and improve opportunities for fundraising partners and supports. Committed to raising funds for some of the crucial programs and therapies, Sandy has aligned herself with the leadership team, board members, and key contacts within the community as they work together to affect change within the care home and the community. She pulls on her ability to motivate and organize individuals to help make a difference in the

lives of everyone at Eden Gardens. Her spontaneity is contagious and on occasion she has been known to grab from her arsenal of Nerf guns and shoot those who pass by her office without checking in! Sandy truly appreciates the contributions of others, and is often thought of as the glue that holds the organization together.

Meryl Heinz:

Upon completion of her Civil Engineering Diploma from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Meryl was hired as an Engineering Technologist at the City of Vancouver. Her career blossomed at the City of Vancouver Materials Lab where she spent six years focusing on asphalt and concrete pavement design, inspection and quality control. The ability to test and evaluate numerous combinations of products in the City's hot mix asphalt plant and ready-mix concrete plant fed a passion for materials and the drive to find solutions to everyday challenges.



In her current role as the Roads Management Specialist with the City of Nanaimo, Meryl manages the capital planning of the road rehabilitation program, participates in budget control and forecasting, and oversees contractors engaged in construction and maintenance of roads. She is excited to be part of a growing community with so many opportunities. Meryl is the current president and first female President of the Public Works Association of British Columbia, active member of the education committee and member of the Asset Management BC Partnership Committee. She was selected to the American Public Works Association Emerging Leaders Academy, all while on maternity leave.

Meryl and her husband own a thriving construction and development company in Oceanside where she works in her "spare time". Meryl is a Certified Engineering Technologist and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. Her and her husband live in Qualicum Beach with their four year old son and one year old daughter. Meryl strives to make a valuable contribution to the public works sector and the services they provide to our municipalities and citizens.

Shawna McPhillips, Senior Manager of HR at Coastal Community Credit Union, was born

and raised in Nanaimo. She loves the life she and her husband have built on Vancouver Island, raising their four children. Ambitious at heart, Shawna started her career at 23 as the youngest Mortgage Broker in Nanaimo. In 2002, she joined Coastal Community Credit Union, where she aligned her values with her employer, leading teams at work and in the community. Shawna has held numerous leadership roles on community boards such as the Young Professionals of Nanaimo (VP), DNBA (VP & Chair) and the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce (President/Past President/VP). As the VP of the Chemainus Monetary Foundation, Shawna helped create a community currency accepted as legal tender in Chemainus. Over the past 21 years working at Coastal, Shawna's leadership has been recognized in numerous ways, including a Top 20 under 40 nominee, Sterling award nominee, Athena award finalist and a BNI Master Networker award winner.



Dedicated to personal mastery and continuous self-improvement, Shawna recently completed her Master's Degree in Leadership at Royal Roads University while working. This accomplishment solidified her leadership philosophy, which

focuses on empowering others to unleash their full potential, breaking down barriers to success, fostering courage to challenge biases, and leading with vulnerability.



Jemana Elsharkawi holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and history, an advanced citation in disability and applied behaviour analysis, a master's degree in special education (specialising in developmental disabilities) and a certificate in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. She has worked with people with disabilities and their families across the province for nearly twenty years as both a special educator and a behaviour analyst. She takes great joy in helping children and families excel and thus exceeding the expectations of those around them. Aside from teaching and supporting children and their loved ones, Jemana is a confident and capable advocate. She has been on the radio and television, and has often been quoted in print

articles discussing the needs of the neurodivergent population she serves and advocating for increased community accessibility. Jemana has attended meetings alongside the families she supports with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Representative for Children and Youth, local MPs, the Justice System and with various School District officials. Jemana recognises the trust bestowed on her by families is the highest honour she could receive and feels privileged by them for nominating her for a WIN award.



Kerri Isham transitioned from being a middle school teacher to a successful business owner and community advocate. She left public-school teaching, became a Certified Sexual Health Educator and started her own consulting business. In 2015 she received the Options for Sexual Health Education award, and, in 2021, she won a Nanaimo Business Award (Health and Wellness category). She is nominated for the Women of Influence Nanaimo in the Community and Social Responsibility category.

Kerri is a passionate and dedicated educator, as well as a community-oriented advocate for social justice. In 2021, she created a grass roots women's collective, called Nanaimo Women Helping Women, to help women flee intimate partner violence and

transition from being unhoused to housed. This group has helped hundreds of women and the organizations that support them.

Kerri believes that with her privileged status comes the responsibility to advocate for and support marginalized community members.

Emily Hoppe is a passionate individual whose dedication to community, youth, and education shines through in all aspects of her life. She is a 5th year Education major at VIU, finishing up her degree in June. Emily works with the City of Nanaimo as the Program Coordinator for the LIT and Quest youth leadership programs, where she has empowered over 250 youth to become the next leaders in our community. Emily also coaches with Nanaimo United FC and dedicates her time and expertise to the youth athletes she works with, helping them to grow both on and off the field.



Meraki & Co is a women owned + operated construction company on Vancouver Island that pools the talents of two women in the world of construction. **Jessica Pitre**, is a Red Seal Carpenter paving the way in all areas of carpentry and building.



Kate Walch, is a Construction Project Manager with a healthcare background in Occupational Therapy and loves all things universally designed. Together, they have embarked on a journey to build, operate and create a life through all things building and with quiet determination bring women to the forefront of construction. Their values empower women to engage in their own building projects, support women in trades + role model the daily existence of working in and on a construction business.

Meet **Dr. Sukhi Sangha**, the proud founder of Vancouver Island Bhangra. She's everything you would hope for in a leader; die hard enthusiasm and charisma that can engage a crowd of all audiences. She comes from humble beginnings in a small community nestled in North Delta and has travelled the globe, spreading her love and joy for Bhangra along the way.

2020 was a transformative year for most of us. For Sukhi, it was the year she chose to settle into Nanaimo, and become our community's go to woman for Bhangra Dance and Fitness. Serving as a Board of Director for the Crimson Coast Dance Society, she actively introduces South Asian arts to Vancouver Island, enriching the cultural tapestry of Nanaimo. Although Sukhi looks like a lean, mean, Bhangra machine; she's much more. She truly believes your mind is the strongest muscle in your body. Most notably, she graduated as a Doctor of Dental Surgery and was named Valedictorian of her graduating class. This all, whilst competing on the national stage on Poland's Got Talent. Sukhi's positivity and commitment to spreading joy through dance has inspired the community, making her a beloved figure in South Asian culture on Vancouver Island.





Angeline Bristol is the Communications Manager for Natural Resources Training Group (NRTG), a global industry leader in natural resource training. With a diverse background in top-tiered marketing, sales and management roles for AMEX, Holt Renfrew, and Clinique, Angeline brings a wealth of experience and genuine people-centric values to NRTG. She is proud to be part of the talented team at NRTG that provides world-class education for their students making meaningful impacts in their lives and in communities globally every day. Angeline brings her substantial experience as a strategic marketer, to promote and expand NRTG’s work authentically and from the heart. She thrives on uplifting and empowering her team and celebrating in their successes.

Her decades of marketing, sales, and management experience as well as strong communication skills and a genuine appreciation and love for people is her driving force that she applies to her role every day. When not planning and implementing strategic marketing initiatives and guiding her team, she cherishes family time, travelling, reading books, other artistic pursuits (interior design) and savouring the surrounding natural beauty by embracing outdoor activities.



Amie Armet is a community leader with nearly ten years of experience in public education and outreach who has passionately dedicated her career to engaging diverse audiences with science and sustainability. In her current role as Public Education Coordinator at Vancouver Island University, Amie develops, coordinates, and delivers STEM-based programs for K-12 students and community groups.

Amie is driven by a passion for fostering positive change and creating inclusive environments. As the founder of Costumes for Kids, Amie has dedicated the past three years to organizing and facilitating a costume exchange event which ensures that Halloween is a joyous experience for all children in need, while also promoting sustainable practices.

In her role as Chair of the Rocky Point Neighbourhood Association, Amie initiated the association's formation in 2023. She is co-lead for fundraising for an ambitious playground building project, while also moderating online group discussions, organizing community-building events, and securing a grant for a neighbourhood environmental sustainability project.

As a devoted mother of two, she balances her career with engaging in community initiatives. She aims to serve as a positive role model to her daughters by exemplifying values of compassion, inclusivity, and the importance of making a meaningful impact in her community.



Alexzandra Hale is a Registered Physiotherapist who specializes in Pelvic Floor and Pediatric Care. After completing her Master's Degree in Physiotherapy at McMaster University, Alex moved back to Nanaimo to start serving the community in 2017. Alex takes a whole person approach to her assessment and treatment and feels as though all parts of a person need to be considered for optimal outcomes. She also uses patients' goals to make rehab personal and meaningful.

In addition to her clinical work, Alex teaches medical professionals across the country about pelvic health and the use of a biopsychosocial approach. Alex thrives when it comes to offering education to the local community in particular. Alex enjoys to be active in any way she can including soccer, hiking, surfing and adventuring with her family. She has an incredible husband that supports all her life goals as well as 2 sons and a daughter in the stars. After the loss of her daughter Lily, Alex created "Lilys Referral" which offers pelvic health rehabilitation free of charge to any person who has lost a child after 20 weeks gestation. Alex feels so privileged to do the work she does and hopes she can continue to increase access to this under served specialty.



Miranda Lam is a 20 year old highland dancer at Brigadoon Dance Academy. Last summer she performed in the prestigious Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo where she danced along side a team of 54 elite highland dancers. The cast, consisting of military bands and acts from around the world, performed for 9000 people almost every night for the month of August at the Edinburgh Castle, including members of the Royal Family. She has dreamed of being apart of this incredible show since the beginning of her dance career and this goal motivated her to recover after years of suffering from an eating disorder.

Upon being discharged from residential treatment, Miranda joined a group with others impacted by eating disorders called BC Voices of Hope in order to raise awareness of the decrease in support of adults suffering from eating disorders in BC. Miranda aims to provide the younger dancers at her studio with a strong and healthy role model and encourages all struggling dancers to reach out for help. In the future, she hopes to pursue a career that is involved in helping affected youth overcome eating disorders so that they have the opportunities to accomplish their dreams as she did.

Heather Baitz has a PhD in clinical psychology and has been providing therapy services to clients in Nanaimo since she moved here from the lower mainland in 2019. She became a climate activist in 2018 after learning about the urgency of the climate crisis, and in 2020 she helped to found the Nanaimo Climate Action Hub. She has two wonderful daughters, a supportive husband and an excitable little white dog. Heather has a passion for food forest gardening, and especially loves to grow unusual edible plants.



Kerilie McDowall has been an active Shaw Spotlight television volunteer, learning from 2015 to 2022 with Todd Jones, Jocelyn Matwe, Stas Bobkov, John Mackenzie, Kelly Adam, and Annette Lucas. Thanks to her work with the innovative Shaw Spotlight team and volunteer cameraman, Doug Tombe, Kerilie became a 12x award-winning jazz short documentary TV Director of *In the Zone: Rick Kilburn*. Kerilie reached 13 million+ hits on the movie site IMDB Pro in November 2023.



Kerilie and the 2020 Shaw Spotlight staff team won three global Best Web and New Media awards from Hollywood and varied Best Documentary and Inspirational Film awards from Las Vegas (2), China, Japan (2), Toronto, London, Milan, ten nominations, and a Best Director award from South Korea.

McDowall started as a professional guitarist 40 years ago and is a Nanaimo guitar, film, and music industry instructor/music judge. She's the owner of the *In the Zen* blog and Canadian Online Guitar Lessons.

A guitarist-jazz bandleader and instructor in Vancouver, BC for over a decade, Kerilie came to the island in 2000. Her passions are music composing, organic gardening, and writing. For 24 years, McDowall has been tremendously inspired working with gifted students, creatives, and award-winning JUNO/Polaris musicians.

K'reen Kerr has been living in Nanaimo with her children since 2011 and appreciates our fabulous natural surroundings. She owns and operates a garden design, install, and maintenance business called Savannah Landscapes. K'reen loves sharing her horticultural and hardscaping knowledge with her Lovely Clients and followers on her social media pages. She loves the work she does, and is passionate about helping people to enjoy their outdoor spaces, whether they be townhouse postage-stamp-size plots or vast acreages. She has been a single parent since 2016 to 3 "interesting" kids (now 15, 17, and 20 years old) and Mama to various pets, one of whom is known as The Supervisor to her friends and fans (her dog, Phoenix). K'reen hikes, bikes, swims, and does art to ground herself and take advantage of the spectacular home we have on Vancouver Island.



Michelle Hohn splits her time between being a registered counsellor in the Oceanside community and as a psychological health and safety and human rights consultant in the global mining sector. In her counselling practice, Michelle specializes in loss, grief, and transpersonal psychology. In her organizational consulting, her focus on psychological health and safety substantively contributes to improvement in occupational health and safety performance through elevating the importance of mental health in the workplace. She also has expertise in human rights due diligence, working with organizations to eliminate child or forced labour, and ensuring the inclusion of diverse voices and marginalized perspectives through proactive stakeholder engagement.

Of her accomplishments, Michelle is most proud of the 2022 Amazon Bestselling anthology *My Mother's Story: Gone Too Soon*. This moving and inspirational anthology documents and celebrates the extraordinary (albeit far too brief) lives of ordinary women, while also revealing the transformative healing journey of the authors who experienced mother loss

in childhood or adolescence. Michelle spearheaded the project, designed and facilitated the author writing workshops, and was a contributing author and co-editor to this collection and indelible bereavement resource.

Michelle resides in Nanoose Bay and when not working enjoys the spectacular beauty of Vancouver Island; most often found, hiking, mountain biking, and boating with her husband and German Shepherd.



Bailey Macabre is a queer, disabled, neurodivergent, and agender Cree/metis/ukrainian interdisciplinary artist, as well as the Indigenous Engagement Coordinator at Nanaimo Art Gallery. Born and raised on beautiful Snuneymuxw territory here in Nanaimo, Bailey returned in 2021 after spending many years away in the Okanagan and in Vancouver.

They are passionate about Indigenous solidarity, accessibility, and finding new ways to connect both the urban Indigenous population and members of the host nations across the mid-Island region. Bailey's practice includes beadwork, textiles, cyanotype, embroidery, painting, poetry, writing, and illustration, and their artwork speaks to Indigenous futurisms, queerness, community, and healing. Some of their notable and more recent work includes designing The Discourse Nanaimo's 2022 limited-edition tote bags, illustrating the cover of Jen Ferguson's latest novel *Those Pink Mountain Nights*,

their solo exhibition *pakicihew: she has swollen hands*, curated by local artist Amber Morrison-Fox through the Nanaimo Arts Council, and their textile work in *Gutters are Elastic*, Nanaimo Art Gallery's summer exhibition.

Dr. Christine Layton completed her Medical Degree at the University of British Columbia in. She then moved to Nanaimo to pursue speciality training in Family Medicine and joined the Caledonian Clinic in 2018. Dr. Layton lives and breathes for Maternity Care and Women's Health! Dr. Layton enjoys creating meaningful connections with her maternity patients throughout their pregnancy journey and postpartum period. Dr. Layton offers extended postpartum care to Caledonian Clinic patients.

She is passionate about cervical cancer screening, discussing contraception, inserting IUDs and implants, sexual health, and vulvar health. When she is not in the clinic, she assists OBGYNs in the operating room, delivers babies, and leads Prenatal Classes. Dr. Layton aims to provide timely and accessible care to individuals who have Women's Health concerns. Her goal is to create a positive and non-judgemental environment in which individuals feel safe asking questions and learning about their health and wellbeing. Dr. Layton enjoys providing education to her patients and aims to empower patients.

When she is not working, Dr. Layton is an avid traveller. Her hobbies include hiking, surfing, skiing and pampering her Pomeranian. Dr. Layton enjoys black coffee, a good workout, reading, and sharing a laugh with her friends.





Emma Salisbury is a Lupus and stroke survivor who has managed to continue life through every curveball that's thrown her way. Emma has graduated from Vancouver Island University with her bachelor's in Child and Youth Care and enjoys public speaking about her story through her hospital experience. She works at the Child Development Centre as a support worker for children with neurological disabilities. Emma is passionate about fitness and takes classes weekly at Zen Revolution.

Nadiya Albishchenko is a distinguished Global leader in international trade, a Model, an Author, and an entrepreneur with a passion for Sustainability. Holding dual Master's degrees in Business Management and Genetics, Nadiya seamlessly blends her scientific expertise with business acumen.

Business Ventures: In 2015, she founded INAS EXIM LLC, a pioneering venture offering tailored food solutions. Nadiya is recognized for her business leadership style by leading business magazines like Authority Magazine, CIO Times, InsightsSuccess, Worlds Leaders, Tycoon Success, and more.

Sustainability: Committed to sustainability, Nadiya showcased a recyclable dress that she tailored herself at BeingShe Universe 2020, earning the Best Personality and Second Runner-Up title. She extends her commitment through the Art "Mystique", crafting eco-friendly wall decorations.

Authorship: In June 2023, she co-authored the book "Synergy: A Synopsis of an Elite Business Partnership" with her business partner, Vinay Gandhi. The book offers an insightful journey from ordinary beginnings to thriving entrepreneurship, exploring experiences in international trade, business management, and the values shaping their remarkable careers.

Nadiya's vision transcends boundaries, advocating for sustainability, empowering women, and fostering a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. Her positive and enduring impact resonates globally.



Jessica Marley is a Mom of 2 girls, married to her grade school sweetheart and has 15 years experience in civil litigation.

She moved to the Island from Ontario and had such a passion for community and connections and wanted to bring the two together. In joining The Mom Market in 2021 she has created just that. Her markets span from tip to tip and allow for businesses to share their goods with all different communities. She ensures that the experience at the market is something that will be remembered by both the small businesses involved and the shoppers who attend. A true passion project.

Cheryl Lien is the founder and CEO behind Queer Alchemy: group mentorship and spiritual embodiment for neurospicy folks beyond the binary. Cheryl loves to support others in bringing their professional, personal, and spiritual desires into reality. As a non-binary person with unseen disabilities, they use their experiential knowledge and vocational training to bring compassion, healing, empathy and inclusion to everything they do one person at a time. They are a multi-talented communications and connections aficionado with a special fondness for empowering inclusive and diverse spaces both online and in person. Often the person called to fill in when a director, stage manager, admin support, or even pet sitter is sick, Cheryl loves lending time to ensure success for those around them. They graduated with a Bachelor Degree in Creative Writing and Journalism from VIU just before the pandemic, a degree they use every single day writing, speaking, sharing, supporting, creating and more. Cheryl has worked closely with the local arts, 2slgbtqia+, and marginalized communities donating services, support, time and more. Cheryl lives in Nanaimo with their wife Liv, their three rescue cats, and their pollinator sanctuary.



Lucy Stainsby is the owner and creator of I Love Lucy Tattoo. She is an artist, tattooer, Intuitive healer, and tarot reader. As the self-proclaimed Meaning Maker she has created the Intuitive Tattoo experience, a unique process she has developed using her various skills of tarot reading, energy work and design to facilitate personal transformational experiences for her clients. She hopes to inspire a new approach to tattooing, embracing the power of intentional and meaningful body art.

Lucy's secondary passion is education and community building, teaching tarot reading and other intuitive tools to inspire self-awareness, empowerment and healing using her social media platforms and hosting workshops.

Lucy's personal experience healing from childhood trauma, CPTSD, and chronic pain associated with various health challenges informs her practice with a deep empathy and a passionate interest for natural and alternative healing methods. Tattoo has always been a tool for self expression and personal empowerment for Lucy - a way of reclaiming her physical body with art. She has used her creativity to embrace her high sensitivity and intuitive nature, which has in turn transformed how she approaches her work, allowing her nurturing feminine energy to lead her business in a historically male-dominated industry.

Lidice Megla (she/ her) is a Cuban Canadian hyphenated poet and translator with several published poetry collections. She began writing after her 40s, becoming the winner of three international poetry contests and a full member of the Literary Translators Association of Canada. A nature lover and a dedicated translator with a collection that ranges from art brut to poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, Lidice works to disperse the work of fellow hyphenated voices in Canada and the Latin and Cuban unknown writers across the diaspora. As an interpreter working with refugees at the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society in Nanaimo, she facilitates communication for new families starting their lives in Canada. She is a contributor to the literary magazine Sea and Cedar of the Vancouver Island Regional Island, a participant in the local authors fair at her Nanaimo library branch, and a Federation of Writers of British Columbia member. She is currently a mentee of Chelene Knight at the Writer in Residence Arc Poetry Magazine Program. Her books can be found at <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B07XVT6DK8> www.lidicemeglapoetry.com





Esther Charlie- ChwEEnak traditional name is a strong indigenous woman that comes from the Nlaka’pamux Nation in Lytton BC. She has resided on Vancouver Island for over 40 years, and the last 20 years in the Snuneymuxw Territory. Esther is a 60’s scoop survivor and her personal healing journey has influenced her passion; commitment and her intention to support the wellness of others. She has been blessed to work with and support several Coast Salish Elders and families. Many have generously shared their teachings and cultural ways, which has guided her personal and professional practices.

Esther has provided support and services to Indigenous people for 30 years. She is committed to the spiritual, emotional and mental healing for all people and is deeply committed to traditional practices that promote wellness. She has been focused on working to disrupt the cycles of inter-generational trauma which comes from colonialism, the Residential School system and the 60’s

scoop. Most recently, Esther had the opportunity to develop, support and train non-indigenous people from a variety of professional backgrounds in the area of sexual assault awareness and advocacy. Esther continues to be an Indigenous advocate promoting personal wellness and healing, creating services that are Indigenous-Informed, culturally safe and relevant.

Trish Turnbull: “Passion and love for people and life!”

*Life Time Achievement Award (Remax International) – Top producing agent/ over 20 years in the business

*Spirit Award (Remax of Nanaimo) – commitment and enthusiasm to better the work place for staff and colleagues / volunteered over 15 years on committees to for positive improvement.

*Facilitated and was part of Secret Santa Programs (both on her own and with a group of amazing women coming together) for over 20 years to bring magic to local, less fortunate families. Some years providing a full Christmas to over 150 families, other years taking on 2-4 families on her own. Most recently, Trish has worked closely with Salvation Army and Haven Society.



- Trish competed internationally as part of Canada’s National Figure Skating Team
- Was awarded the Lieutenant Governor’s Award in College
- Worked on a live TV show
- Co-owned a local electrical contracting company for 15 years where she contributed in trying to create a supportive and fun working environment.
- Trish was part of many fundraising committees and volunteer groups with her church and in her children’s schools and sport groups.
- Contributed to World Vision for over 30 years
- Took part in the Nanaimo Big Sisters program before having her own children
- Recently committed to assisting in the development/maintenance of “Roots to Read” supporting literacy from baby stage, with new moms
- Taking part in assisting a life coach friend of hers in a Women Empowerment Book to be released in May 2024.

But more important than all the above...Trish prides herself in the raising of her 2 amazing now adult children, April and Carter. Their successes say everything about her continued commitment to them...literally, her biggest achievement.

Teresa Ostman

Teresa has a passion for health and wellness. This passion is reflected in everything she does and has a positive affect on her community. She shares health and wellness information professionally, personally and as a volunteer to help people live healthier and happier lives. Teresa is:

- editor and owner of five printed editions of the Wellnessnews Choices for Healthy Living Newsletters on Vancouver Island,
- host of WellnessHub Vancouver Island online health and wellness resource,
- producer of local wellness events and expos,
- host of a Wellness Wednesday weekly radio show,
- host of the Wellness Minute on Act3 Rogers TV show,
- President of the Nanaimo Senior Services Network (NSSN)
- meetup group organizer for a Social and Outdoor Group for Women over 40,
- a community volunteer.

Teresa lives her life with a positive attitude and no regrets. Her passion for helping others shines through in everything she does. From an early age, she was shown the value of volunteering and helping others by her mother who was very active in their community.

She gives to others while also making sure to take care of herself. She believes that you can't really help others if you are not practicing self-care.

As an independent music professional in Nanaimo, **Dianne Bohn** has participated in our community arts and culture events since the mid 1980's. Advanced piano performance and pedagogy diplomas from both Canada and England, and continued development in music genres have opened up diverse and inspiring opportunities in musical theatre, accompanying solo musicians and choirs, piano and ballet, evening soirées and recitals, themed productions such as Christmas, Bard to Broadway, and a wide-ranging variety of musically entertaining events.

In 2020, the Royal Conservatory of Music awarded Dianne with "Teacher of Distinction" representing all of British Columbia and the Yukon. As an active member and past President of the BC Registered Music Teachers Association (Mid-Island Branch), and Piano Chairperson for the Mid Island Performing Arts Festival, a current position she has held for many years, Dianne enjoys being active in the arts and culture of our lovely Island city inspiring young, upcoming artists.

Passionate about weekly lesson time with her students, her full and vibrant piano studio creates a rewarding experience for sharing in their awards, accomplishments, and overall artistic awareness. The love of music resonates through her studio as she encourages young minds to develop their enjoyment of the arts and its fascinating culture as they follow their path of music ~ what it's all about!





Michelle Palmer is a driven and passionate event planner who is just starting her career. Despite facing a major challenge in her life, recovering from a medical emergency and treatment, Michelle has demonstrated resilience and an eagerness to continue pursuing her goals.

Michelle's educational background includes a degree in Tourism Management from Vancouver Island University, which has provided her with a strong foundation for her career. She has also gained valuable experience working with the City of Nanaimo Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, where she helped organize various community events.

Michelle is a passionate traveler who loves exploring new cultures and experiencing different ways of life. She is also a big family person who values the support of her loved ones.

She takes inspiration from the influential individuals in her life, who have served as role models and sources of guidance for her personal and professional growth. Michelle is determined to make a positive impact and is excited to continue learning and growing as an event planner.

Profile of Wendy Urquhart

Wendy, a resilient single mother, successfully raised two independent and accomplished daughters. They bring her immense pride and joy, serving as her shining stars. After a remarkable 40-year career as a Flight Attendant, Wendy transitioned to a licensed Security Worker, showcasing her adaptability and determination. She is proven trustworthy and authentic in both her professional and social worlds.

Despite being severely hard of hearing, Wendy exemplifies perseverance, pushing through limitations to set an inspiring example. Her passions include blog writing, reading, cooking, and attempting home projects. Wendy finds joy in travel, nature, and a deep connection with animals.

In her commitment to community, Wendy will be teaching Speech reading at the Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Institute, fostering connection and support for individuals facing similar limitations. Surrounded by a circle of loving friends and family, Wendy thrives in a supportive community where mutual inspiration and encouragement flourish.



Desirée Pahl, the Artistic Director of Acclaim Celtic Dancers, is a fervent advocate for multiculturalism through dance in Nanaimo. She believes in the simultaneous preservation and reinvention of culture, emphasizing the importance of conserving history while developing new expressions for current times. Recently diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis, a progressive disease, Desirée has successfully reinvented herself, inspiring others with physical disabilities. Her approach, rooted in collaboration, reflects the belief that anything is possible.

With over two decades of experience in Occupational Health and Safety, Desirée brings a wealth of knowledge to her roles. She holds a Bachelor's in Emergency and Security Management, contributing to the creation of



safe and thriving communities. As a certified Celtic Dance Teacher (since 1999), she advocates for diverse teaching methods, emphasizing inquiry-based learning.

Desirée volunteers on a various boards, including Crimson Coast Dance Society and the Victoria Highland Games Association. Her dedication extends to supporting diverse dance communities, from Irish to Latin and Contemporary Dance. Desirée's vision centers on multicultural dance fusion, enriching the community through performance and educational partnerships. Her story is not just one of personal triumph but also a testament to the transformative impact of passion, resilience, and community engagement on a broader scale.



CINDY SHANTZ

Cindy loves being involved in Nanaimo's community and is a Board member of the Port Theatre, Theatre One, and the Nanaimo Ladysmith School Foundation. She's also a professional storyteller—telling stories to adults—and recently has drawn on her experience as a high school English teacher to teach Rotary Youth Exchange students how to write and tell a personal story. Cindy is passionate about discovering people's talents and helping them connect with an appreciative audience. She was a co-founder of WordStorm, which brought writers of all genres together to publicly present their work. She was also a founder of Easy Writers, her own writing group, whom she later took on a tour in Switzerland, where they read their work on stage. Cindy has lived in many places: four Canadian provinces; Bermuda;

Switzerland (for nine years); in a Volkswagen van for a year travelling around Europe; and in an RV for fourteen months touring the United States. While she loves travel—which is fortunate, because she has six children (including three stepchildren) who live all over the world—she is delighted to call Nanaimo home! Ultimately, Cindy embraces Oscar Wilde's advice: "Be yourself, everyone else is taken."

Stephanie Kennedy is a compassionate and resilient individual woman who has overcome personal challenges and transformed her experiences into a platform for helping others. Having faced sexual assault and the heartbreaking loss of her son Deacon to stillbirth, Stephanie understands the profound impact of trauma and grief. Through her own journey of infertility and reproductive struggles, she has gained valuable insights and empathy.

Motivated by her own experiences, Stephanie pursued further education and became a Registered Therapeutic Counsellor. Today, she successfully operates her own counselling practice, specializing in supporting women who have endured sexual trauma and navigating the emotional complexities of pregnancy loss, infant loss, and infertility. Stephanie's dedication to transforming her pain into purpose is evident in her involvement with organizations like the Butterfly Run BC, where she volunteers her time and her facilitation of drop-in support groups for parents facing pregnancy after loss.

Stephanie actively contributes to her community by establishing safe spaces and support networks for individuals, particularly women, seeking connection and understanding. Collaborating with Knox United Church, she develops resources for the local Oceanside community. Stephanie's personal experiences with infertility, reproductive treatments, stillbirth, miscarriage, and sexual assault uniquely equip her to provide compassionate care and guidance to others who have endured similar challenges. Through her initiatives, Stephanie has cultivated a community that uplifts and empowers one another. Her legacy extends beyond her beloved children, Deacon and Lux, as she continues to work tirelessly to reduce the stigma surrounding pregnancy loss, infant loss, infertility, and sexual trauma.





Eva Manly spends her life creating friendly relationships across boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, faith, gender, class, and age. Friendships with students from other parts of the world and living in a First Nations community for four years were important early cross-cultural experiences that inspired her concern for justice.

Eva has been involved in many issues: land rights, residential schools, sexual abuse, inclusive language, the environment, war and displacement, peace, etc. Eva's work, both individual, and collaborative, has been local, provincial, national & international; has included public speaking, co-organizing events with film, speakers, music, book launches, refugee sponsorships. (Involved with First Nations, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Palestine)

Eva has worked with children and youth, including special needs, as director of day care centre, teacher in a Parent Co-op Nursery School, artist/photographer, as an independent film maker (Manly Media, distributed by VTape & VIVO), and producer of **Pressure Point** a justice focussed TV program.

Volunteer work with: Global Film Festival, Global Village, KAIROS, MIJPME, UNJPPI, Canadian Boat to Gaza, Refugee Sponsorships, peace and justice groups.

Eva arranges live music for *Wednesday Morning Community Drop-In Coffee Break* and can be found at marches & rallies for Justice.



Tanacia Campbell, an advocate for the empowerment of women both personally and professionally, stands as a pillar of strength within the insurance industry. She embraces various roles as a mother, partner, daughter, and an innate leader, exhibiting an unwavering commitment to fostering success and nurturing enduring careers within the insurance sector. She has ascended to the role of Regional Manager at HUB International, where she showcases consistent growth and leadership within the organization. Tanacia's commitment to fostering women's success is evident throughout her instrumental role in the HUB Women's Network. Renowned for her dynamic leadership, she mentors individuals and is often contributing significantly to industry teams, councils, and initiatives. Beyond her professional endeavors, Tanacia ardently advocates for mental health awareness, drawing from her personal experiences to eliminate barriers and biases in professional settings.

As a devoted mother, she passionately supports causes like Mamas For Mamas and the Boys & Girls Club both personally and professionally.

Betska K-Burr

- Developer of The Science of Mind-Kinetics® Coaching System
- 2019 2020 Top 100 Global Management Consultants
- Accredited Master Coach (IAPC&M), ACC (ICF)

- Co-President at Coaching and Leadership International Inc.
- Developer of 80+ award-winning methodologies called The Science of Mind-Kinetics® Coaching System.
- Lead Trainer – since 2000, teaches Coaches and Leaders world-wide on 5 continents (virtually and in-person prior to covid)
- Professional Speaker
- Accredited Master Coach (IAPC&M), ICF (ACC)
- Named 2019 and 2020 Top 100 Global Management Consultants by



- CEO Today Magazine
- Coach and confidante to individuals and groups in 50+ countries
- Clients experience remarkable results with up to 1,000 % change in behaviours and/or competencies.
- Canadian best-selling author of many books including Creating Champions, Flying by the Seat of Your ... Plans, Build a Boooooooming Business and The “God” in Coaching – The Key to a Happy Life, i Heal Me ...
- Betska enjoys her life with her husband John and daughter Tania and family.
- Betska is an avid gardener, loves to hike and create healthy vegan food for her family, and has an undeniable weakness for dark chocolate!



Cathy Holmes

Cathy collaborates with multiple non-profit organizations to champion policies that facilitate the formation of crucial connections. Her commitment to informing community members about social justice issues, such as poverty reduction, discrimination against older adults, intimate partner violence, and other significant matters, has enabled many individuals to make their voices heard. Cathy has written articles for Nanaimo Voyager Magazine for nearly 12 years and has volunteered for eight years as a producer for two local television programs. Since 2016, she has also hosted a weekly radio show on CHLY 101.7 FM. Moreover, Cathy possesses a remarkable talent for motivating others, often addressing the significance of community stewardship at local events. She dedicates herself full-time to aiding community agencies in developing solutions for homelessness, mental health, and substance abuse challenges. For nine years, Cathy focused on assisting older adults in accessing resources that would allow them to remain safely in their homes. She has led several community boards and now commits herself to supporting underserved populations, advocating for justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity. Cathy believes education and awareness are crucial for systemic change, and that individual wisdom, once shared, bridges understanding gaps allowing for deeper social awareness.

Celeste Walmsley

Celeste was a successful, self-employed entrepreneur in marketing. She loved serving clients and building relationships with them, and found that being her own boss gave her the freedom to offer personalized services and provide a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere but she eventually decided to pursue a new career path. She has been involved with the Laser Hair Removal industry for over 20 years as a consumer and is a Certified Laser Technician. She has a passion for helping others with skin issues that impact their lives negatively and wants to help them feel more beautiful and confident by treating 'unwants' from their skin.

Celeste used her knowledge and expertise to build a business that offers a wide range of laser treatments, including hair removal, skin rejuvenation, and treatment of scars, spots, fine lines, wrinkles, Rosacea & vein. In addition to running her successful business, Celeste is also an active member of her community. She volunteers her time and resources to various charitable organizations, including those that focus on empowering women and supporting small businesses. Overall, Celeste is an inspiring entrepreneur who has used her skills and passion to build a business that makes a difference in people's lives. That matters!



Erin Sowerby Greene is a regulatory biologist with the Canadian government and lives in Nanaimo, BC. In October 2022, her daughter Briar died at 37.5 weeks gestation. Following this, Erin has become a vocal advocate for pregnancy and infant loss; she works every day to ensure Briar's name isn't forgotten and that other



families feel better supported as they navigate a path no parent should ever have to experience. Since Briar's death she has created a resource document for grieving parents that includes guidance and advice for care providers, family, and friends who may be providing support. She and her husband Cameron fundraised \$35,000 to donate five CuddleCots in Briar's name to Vancouver Island hospitals which allow families to spend more time with their children before saying goodbye. They have also set up Briar's Bursary to send children in Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Victoria Capital Region to pony camp every year. Erin is a committee member for the Butterfly Run Vancouver Island and is looking forward to growing the event after the success in 2023. Erin is incredibly grateful for the WIN nomination and is currently raising her second daughter Aura with Cameron alongside their dogs, cat and horse.

Introducing the incomparable **Linnia Etmanski**

Linnia was born July 19, 1959 and raised in Nanaimo and has always been recognised as a community leader by helping others and by raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for many not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo. She is very passionate about the community she lives in and strongly believes in giving as much as she possibly can to as many as she can. She has had the privilege to sit on many Not for Profit Boards as a director for the following (some current some past) Angels Abreast Dragon Boat Team; (Linnia is a breast cancer survivor)



- B.C. & Yukon Restaurant Association
- Nanaimo Sport Achievement Awards.

In addition to giving of her time she has sponsored:

- Pee Wee Barrel Racing,
- Curling Teams,
- Nanaimo Sport's Achievement Awards, and
- Fishing for Fun.
- Breast Cancer
- ALS
- Nanaimo Curling Club
- Almost Christmas Auction.

Her work history has been largely in the hospitality sector. She is trailblazer in the hospitality industry and has been for over 30 years. She provides leadership and mentorships for women in the industry by managing successful employee engagement and loyalty programs and by having the ability to tap into others' strengths.

Like many, she has had to reassess her business Livewire Catering which she has owned for over 7 years. COVID introduced many challenges but it also presented many opportunities. By redefining their role in the community and amending their menu of services, they are not only able to survive in uncertain times but they are thriving.

Her hobbies and interests include:

- Building Charcuterie Boards;
- Travelling the world;
- NASCAR;
- Reading;
- Shopping.

Linnia has been very humbled by her nomination appreciates all of the relationships and friendships that have come her way in the past 60 plus years. Both professionally and personally these relationships have become intertwined in her success both as a human and a business woman. Linnia has shared that she feels that this nomination is a once in a lifetime experience. I believe and have shared with her that “It’s about time” that she has been recognised for the woman she is and this is the first of many recognitions to come her way.

Shine on Linnia !! Linnia Etmanskin LiveWire Catering



As the People and Culture Manager at NRTG, **Caroline Turnbull** is dedicated to fostering an environment where employees feel valued and empowered to realize their full potential. With a background in diverse industries, including the corporate sector and national heritage here in Canada and the U.K., she brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to support everyone at NRTG. Caroline is committed to building connections, transcending distances, and making a positive impact on the career journeys of all team members. Caroline is a devoted Mom to her wonderful 6 and 7 year old daughters here in Nanaimo.

Marie Ranalli is half owner of a landscaping company that gives her ability to help seniors with their outdoor needs, she goes beyond helping to organizing BBQ's in the community, dinners at holidays for all neighbors, taking garbage out and cleaning yards. Marie has a drive for community togetherness, she believes that every neighbor should know each other and lend a helping hand when needed.

Marie started an online auction site that you bid in non-perishable foods instead of money and raised just over 35,000 pounds of food for charities in just under a year.

She has a passion for animals and will help any in need, from volunteering to fostering them into a new home,

Marie does not feel like she belongs amongst all these incredible women, she is just a person that believes that others are important also and deserve a break once in awhile.



Tanya Hiltz is the founder and driving force behind Stone Soup, a passion project that she initiated in 2017. Over the course of nearly two years, this endeavor evolved into Stone Soup Kitchen, officially opening its doors on February 15, 2023.

The journey began in Tanya's backyard, where she and her team dedicated themselves to providing meals for the Street Folks in their community. When the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic arose, Tanya and her group stood resiliently as the sole organization to continue serving their street community, consistently providing nourishment to 100 individuals. Today, their nightly outreach has expanded to accommodate 225 people seven days a week.

Tanya's commitment to caring for the street folks deepened significantly following her personal battle with Covid-19. Hospitalized from January 6, 2023, to February 12, 2023, she faced a close call with the virus. Upon her return home, she wasted no time in realizing her dream of Stone Soup Kitchen.

Undeterred by her recent health struggles, Tanya orchestrated a heartwarming "Christmas On The Street" event on December 26, 2023, feeding over 300 individuals and marking the eighth year of their impactful tradition. In recognition of her remarkable contributions, Tanya Hiltz takes pride in being a nominee, expressing heartfelt gratitude to all those who support and acknowledge her efforts.



Dr. Deborah Saucier was appointed President and Vice-Chancellor of Vancouver Island University in July 2019. Dr. Saucier holds a PhD in psychology from the University of Western Ontario and a BSc and MSc in psychology from the University of Victoria. She received her International Baccalaureate diploma from the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific in Metchosin, near Victoria.



Prior to joining VIU, Dr. Saucier was President of MacEwan University in Edmonton and Provost and Academic Vice-President of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. Dr. Saucier is a distinguished researcher in both psychology and neuroscience. She was the Canadian Research Chair in Behavioural Neuroscience at the University of Lethbridge and Dean of Science at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and has garnered numerous grants to support her research, including awards from Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation.

Dr. Saucier is also the author of two books in psychology and an advocate for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). At Vancouver Island University, Dr. Saucier has guided the development and implementation of the institution's first strategic plan. The plan includes three core values – People, Place and Potential – and six commitments for the next five years. Following the guidance of the plan, Dr. Saucier is working to build on the institution's strengths and fostering the unique educational experience at VIU to be more accessible, more inclusive, and more deeply rooted in community.

Born in Saskatoon, Dr. Saucier is a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta. In 2020, she was awarded the Indigenous Women in Leadership Award from the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. As president of Vancouver Island University, Dr. Saucier is focused on helping to close the education gap for Indigenous youth and working to incorporate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), and the TRC Calls to Action into institutional decision making by implementing both policy and physical changes on campus to ensure that Indigenous cultures and knowledges are reflected in campus spaces. Dr. Saucier is married to curator and contemporary artist Chai Duncan and has a teenage daughter.

Merrilee Tognela's unwavering dedication to positive impact is evident in both professional achievements and community contributions. This reflects a soul deeply committed to making the world a brighter place.

In her roles as a loving wife, mother, and grandmother, Merrilee's authenticity becomes the foundation of meaningful connections. Her compassion extends beyond human relationships, embracing a profound calling for animal advocacy. Her commitment to those who cannot speak for themselves paints a vivid picture of her selfless character.

As a formidable businesswoman in the real estate space, Merrilee's success is not just measured in financial terms but in the positive difference she makes in the lives of others. Her influence stretches beyond closing deals and contracts, reaching into the community where her contributions uplift and inspire. Merrilee's calling for animal advocacy adds another layer to her compassionate narrative, showcasing a profound connection to all living beings.



Andrea McCaw, Mobile Mortgage Manager at Coastal Community Credit Union, was born and raised in Nanaimo. Andrea has been an accredited Residential Mortgage and Business Lender for the past 22 years, most of her career with Coastal Community Credit Union. Andrea's favorite part of her job is when she gets to help her clients achieve their dreams through home ownership. Andrea's contributions to the business community were recognized as a Top 20 under 40 Business and Community Achievement finalist in 2013, 2014, and 2015.

In addition to building a meaningful career at Coastal Community, Andrea is a trailblazer in the autism community. Having a daughter with autism has opened her eyes to a new world of special needs and advocacy. Therefore, Andrea and her husband, Craig, are determined to provide their daughter with every possible opportunity to live a whole and meaningful life filled with adventure on Vancouver Island.

Andrea is a leader in the community known for her perseverance and optimism, which is contagious to everyone she meets. She continuously pays forward her knowledge in the community, including roles such as a past board member of the Nanaimo Child Development Center and a longtime volunteer with the Autism Society of Central Vancouver Island and Canadian Blood Services.

Melissa Burke is the owner of VI Kidz Kompany Childcare Group Ltd. From a young age Melissa aspired to help people. Through work in the Parks, Recreation and Culture programs, she landed in the "early years". She is an Early Childhood Educator passionate about encouraging young children to become their best selves. Melissa believes that all children have the right to a safe and fun early childhood environment. Melissa was born and raised in Nanaimo and is so grateful to give back to the community that she has called home her entire life. Not only is she passionate about the children she works with, she encourages her team to be the best educators they can be. She is always available to help problem solve or offer guidance. In her down time, Melissa likes to spend time with her dogs (Lucy and Harrison), all of the amazing people she's grateful to have in her life and it's not uncommon to find her watching a good crime show! Melissa is so humbled to be considered as a Woman of Influence.





Corinne Cochrane has a passion for helping others, which is why she pursued her Bachelor of science in Nursing. She worked as a Nurse for 14 years which was extremely fulfilling, working in the Emergency department fulfilled her passion of being able to help families at their time of need. Once she became a mother, balancing her career, her family, and her health was taking a toll and in 2014 she decided she wanted make a career change and start her own business focusing on helping families in the area of health promotion and prevention, leaving her career, her pension, and stable job was a big leap of faith that was the best decision she ever made. Creating time freedom, and financial freedom for herself fuelled her to help other woman do the same. For the past 9 years Cory has been helping other woman to create extra income for their families, diving into to helping with their personal development, and improving their families health. Recently she made a life decision to quick drinking alcohol, and share her journey publicly to inspire others to grow in their own journey.

Bio for Kathi Baart:

Kathi is a 68 year old born and raised Nanaimoite who credits her parents as her role models because they were community minded and animal lovers as well. She has been an active volunteer in Nanaimo for over 40 years and has chosen to live her life being kind and thoughtful towards others, the animals and the environment. Her career at the Nanaimo RCMP Detachment as the Traffic Steno for 31 yrs, gave her much insight into what was happening around town. She met many people from all walks of life and learned many life skills which helped her assist the public when dealing with various traffic related matters. For many years, she volunteered with organizing the Detachment's Christmas Food Hampers that were delivered to Nanaimo's needy families.

For over half her life, Kathi has volunteered with Nanaimo's animal related groups including the City Pound, the Nanaimo & District SPCA, and the CatNap Society. She started out by walking dogs at the City Pound when first married and living in an apartment. She later became a dedicated SPCA Fundraising Volunteer & was on the Board of Directors for over 10 yrs. She was one of several volunteers in BC who was awarded the 1993 SPCA Humanitarian Award. Eventually Kathi left the SPCA to help co-found Nanaimo's only cat rescue group that she and several others created in 1998. This group called CatNap, is a 100% volunteer based and registered non profit society, that twenty five years later, still rescues and cares for the stray, feral and abandoned cats in our community. Kathi remains an active volunteer with CatNap and has been on the Board for 25 years.

The 2023 story of Chloe, the missing cat from Ontario, who escaped from her senior owner's car while parked at Port Place Mall, was Nanaimo's 2nd most read animal related story. Kathi and several others plastered posters around town, placed food in strategic places, called her name, and talked with downtown homeless people for 3 weeks. Miraculously, after being lost for 3 weeks, Chloe was found in a downtown excavator's engine compartment. Kathi took Chloe to her home and cared for her for a few days. Within the week of being found, a CatNap volunteer who was flying to Ontario on business, took Chloe with her, reuniting the senior owner with her precious cat. Over the years, Kathi herself has helped rescue hundreds of cats, numerous dogs, birds, a baby deer and even an owl.

These last few years, she has been helping some of the homeless people downtown with food, gift certificates, and clothing. Kathi's motto is "Be Kind" and her rear car window's decal displays those inspirational words.



Kathy Berg is the proud Branch Manager of Island Savings Woodgrove Branch and co-chair for the Nanaimo Ladysmith School Foundation (NLSF), supporting the many kids in our community who need assistance. Kathy is passionate about the NLSF Food For Schools Program providing support to almost 2,400 students who participate in school meals programs. Food 4 Schools has created a food depot to allow access to donated food, bulk purchase, sort, store and deliver to schools across the District Programs may include breakfast, lunch and or snacks. The 2 branches in Nanaimo now volunteer on a weekly basis in the food depot to get orders out to various schools and will be recognized in an upcoming blog at Volunteer Canada.



Kathy has always supported her community in many different areas, from coaching softball teams, sitting on the board of her daughter’s swim club and organizing the 2022 prom for one of the larger, local high schools. For 10 years, Kathy sat on the Banks Committee team for the BC Children’s Hospital Foundation, helping raise over \$10 million over those 10 yrs. For Miracle Weekend. When she and her family relocated to Nanaimo in 2013, she worked with another amazing lady in the community to restart the Festival of Trees at Nanaimo North Town Centre. The focus was to fundraise for those in our area who need to use the hospital and/or provide more resources here. Now through the partnership with Island Savings and the Nanaimo Hospital Foundation, she provides support where she can to promote mental health at work, inner circle and the community.

Kathy encourages others to volunteer as well, including her family and co-workers, you may see her daughter joining in many of these activities! Find your passion and do what you can to give back, it is the most rewarding thing you can do!



Aman Hair

Aman, a proficient banker, seamlessly manages her roles as a devoted wife and mother of two. Driven by the Sikh principle of recognizing the whole human race as one, Aman passionately engages in community service. Her commitment to uplifting others aligns with her belief in the interconnectedness of humanity.

Aman's dedication to community service reflects her deep-rooted belief in the oneness of humanity, motivating her to actively contribute to the well-being of those around her. In her banking role, Aman utilizes her financial expertise to empower individuals and families towards stability. Beyond her professional achievements, she finds joy and fulfillment in her familial responsibilities.

As a nominee, Aman's bio encapsulates a life journey marked by successful banking endeavors and unwavering commitment to community welfare, Her story is one of balance, resilience, and a steadfast dedication to making a positive impact on the world.

Nancy Tsangaris

Nancy was born in Campbell River and has lived on the island most of her life, with a couple of small detours for college and work in Vancouver, and 6 years living in a mining town in Northern British Columbia. She returned to the Island as a young woman to raise her sons in the place she calls home. She is a true Island Girl!

Nancy was a founding board member of the Air Cadet Squadron Sponsoring Committee in Campbell River. She developed and facilitated 133 courses for Air Cadet Squadrons on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland, including Confidence Building, Public Speaking and Employment Preparation, to set the cadets up for lifetime success.

Locally, and more recently, Nancy was involved as a member of the board for Wisteria Lane when it first started. She has volunteered at the Red Cross Equipment Loan program here in Nanaimo and is currently the Volunteer Membership Liaison for the Nanaimo Disability Resource Centre. She is a sensitive, caring person who believes in helping the seniors in her neighborhood; continues to hand out backpacks to the homeless and donates to various organizations helping the homeless. Her favourite words are “building a memory”.



Tia Sutton

Tia has proudly turned adversity into success after coming from a challenging background beginning in the foster care system from the age of 9, to being homeless and facing substance use issues. Through her struggles she has stayed resilient in her pursuit of creating a life of integrity, purpose and fulfillment. She is now the proud owner of two small businesses here in Nanaimo that focus on supporting women. Through her business Your Skin Magician she has created a safe and supportive space while transforming skin and restoring confidence in her patients. In addition to Your Skin Magician Tia is also the founder of The Beauty Hub, a collaborative beauty space to support independent aestheticians to grow their own businesses while being a part of a supportive community.

Outside of her businesses on a personal level Tia's life mission is to give hope and inspire others who come from background like hers to get out into the world and fight for themselves and the life they deserve.



Kathleen Darby

Kathleen Darby is an experienced arts and culture leader and consultant with a track record of success in cultural planning, program implementation, event management, fundraising, and board governance. With over 30 years of combined experience in the culture, education, and hospitality sectors across three provinces in Canada, Kathleen has held senior-level positions in several well respected organizations. As a passionate presenter and educator, Kathleen has a proven ability to engage and mentor cultural sector professionals at all levels. She has delivered keynote speeches, taught courses, facilitated workshops, and provided mentorship across the continuum of the culture sector. Throughout her career, Kathleen has held several senior positions with leading organizations such as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Banff Centre for the Arts Theatre Division, and Creative Manitoba. Her leadership and vision have been instrumental in building and growing several organizations from the ground up, including the Costume Museum of Canada and the Winnipeg International Writers Festival.



Kathleen moved to Nanaimo in 2008 to take on the position of Executive Director with the Nanaimo Conservatory of Music and during her eight years there started a Chamber Music Festival, served as the President of the BC Association of Community Music Schools, helped the Nanaimo Youth Choir go to Carnegie Hall, and served in the task force to create the City of Nanaimo's Cultural Plan. She also served as the first executive director of the Bethlehem Centre after the Benedictine Nuns decided to sell the Westwood Lake property. Currently, Kathleen works from her home office in Ladysmith as the Executive Director of the Creative City Network of Canada, a national network of municipal culture leaders (Nanaimo and Ladysmith are members) committed to fostering community development and engagement in the arts and culture sector. As a volunteer, she sits on the Public Art Committee of Council for the Town of Ladysmith and spent over ten years singing with Panache Singers. Kathleen holds a BA in Theatre and Business Administration (Double Major) and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Management from the University of Winnipeg.



Amy Pye

For the past two decades, Amy has played a pivotal role in shaping the design industry in Nanaimo. Her unwavering commitment to the community and its rich cultural heritage has been a constant throughout this period. Amy's dedication to sharing knowledge with the next generation is showcased through her engaging talks and portfolio reviews at Vancouver Island University, John Barsby Secondary School, and Dover Bay Secondary School.

Beyond her contributions to education, Amy extends her commitment to nurturing a love for culture among the younger generation. This is exemplified by her involvement with elementary schools, where she reads her own children's books. Amy goes beyond the educational realm, actively volunteering at the Nanaimo Art Gallery and Literacy Center Vancouver Island, showcasing her deep passion for community engagement.

Amy is entering her third year on Nanaimo's Urban Design Roster, leaving an indelible mark on Nanaimo's landscape through her impactful work on street banners, utility bins, and the branding of the city's 150th-anniversary celebration.

As Amy approaches the 10th anniversary of running her design business, Pye Design, and serving as the Head of Marketing for Real Estate Webmasters, she embraces the challenges of being a single mother to a dynamic founrado, showcasing her resilience and determination.

Serra Stewart, a visionary entrepreneur and dance enthusiast, has left an indelible mark on the Nanaimo community through her dedication to fostering creativity and self-expression. Born and raised in Nanaimo, Serra's journey led her to establish Vibrant Studios, a thriving dance haven, where she has been the proud owner for the past 18 years.

From the outset, Serra's mission was clear – to create a safe and welcoming space for dancers of all ages. Vibrant Studios, under her stewardship, has become a hub for thousands of youth in Nanaimo and the surrounding areas. Serra's commitment to providing a supportive environment has empowered young dancers to explore their passion, express themselves freely, and develop their skills in a nurturing setting.

Serra's dream was simple yet profound: to ensure that anyone entering Vibrant Studios would feel not only the rhythm of the music but also the warmth of acceptance and encouragement. Her dedication to this vision has transformed



Vibrant Studios into more than just a dance studio; it's a community where individuals can find solace, unleash their creativity, and forge lasting connections.

Serra Stewart continues to inspire and uplift those around her, leaving an enduring legacy in the world of dance and community building. She is truly honoured for the nomination and to be included in this new event.



Kimberly Plumley

Kimberly Plumley is a seasoned public relations (PR) professional in the field of arts and entertainment.

With tireless dedication, she has been using her expertise in the vibrant world of creativity since 1996. Her work is not merely a profession but a profound passion that has woven a tapestry of experiences with books, music, theatre, and a diverse array of artists.

Kim thrives on the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the creative realm, finding fulfillment in the intricate dance of ideas and expressions.

Throughout her career, Kim Plumley has garnered a reputation for being a dedicated advocate for the arts, seamlessly navigating the realms of public relations to champion the voices of talented individuals. For her, working with creative minds is not just a job; it is an honour to collaborate with those who contribute to the rich cultural tapestry of our community.

With a deep-seated commitment to fostering the arts, Kim continues to be a driving force behind the scenes, ensuring that artistic brilliance gets the recognition and spotlight it deserves.

Bio Robyn Foster

Robyn Foster is a Nanaimo artist specializing in sculpture and painting. Born in Winnipeg Manitoba,

Robyn moved to the island as a youth and still calls Nanaimo her home.

Robyn received a Master of Fine

Arts degree from the University of Western Ontario (2002) and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree (honours

and distinction 2000) from the University of Victoria. In 2000 Robyn was awarded the Helen Pitt Award

for outstanding achievement in sculpture. Robyn has exhibited her art both locally and nationally and

her work can be found in private collections. In 2009 Robyn opened Creative Escape Art Programs, an

art studio in Nanaimo, B.C. and enjoys teaching a variety of programs to individual and groups of all

ages. Robyn is passionate about inspiring creativity in her students. In the almost fifteen years in

business, she has seen many of her students grow and complete their own degrees. Outside of the

studio, Robyn loves to explore the island with her husband and son and feels blessed to be part of such a

diverse, supportive community.



Karleena Wiebe

Karleena Wiebe, LMA's CEO and Co-Founder, passionately advocates for building resilient individuals. Overcoming a spinal injury that reshaped her athletic journey, Karleena prioritizes functional strength and pain-free movement.

Her coaching philosophy transcends aesthetics, emphasizing the intrinsic rewards of performance goals. Karleena believes that true strength, cultivated in the gym, extends into every aspect of life, instilling inner confidence.

With 16 years of coaching experience, she fosters a hands-on, approachable style, nurturing a connected community. Guided by integrity, honesty, and hard work, Karleena extends her commitment beyond the gym, fostering an environment where strength, health, and achievement seamlessly converge. As a nominee, Karleena Wiebe blends athletic expertise with a sincere dedication to empowering a community of strong individuals.



Katie Littlejohn

Katie Littlejohn is a dedicated and compassionate Registered Massage Therapist based in Nanaimo, BC. Katie has been practicing massage therapy since 2008 and has a keen interest and focused practice in pregnancy, postnatal care including c-section scar rehabilitation, breast/chest care and pelvic health.

In 2018, Katie manifested her dream by opening Wild Coast Wellness, a beautiful west-coast inspired clinic that is nurturing, inclusive & welcoming. Katie's genuine dedication to patient-centered care is a cornerstone of her practice, recognizing and valuing the uniqueness of each individual's needs.

Beyond her practice, Katie has various community involvements. Her collaborations with Mamas for Mamas, sponsorship of the Butterfly Run, and support for the Pacific Postpartum Support Society underscore her commitment to community well-being, particularly during transformative life phases.

Katie's impact extends beyond the treatment room, as she has been recognized as a nominee in the Women of Influence Health & Wellness category. This nomination is a true honour for Katie.

Dr. Marie Hopwood

Dr. Marie Hopwood is an Archaeologist, Professor and Chair of the Anthropology Department at Vancouver Island University. Through her research project, Raise Your Glass to the Past: An Experimental Archaeology of Beer, Marie brews ancient-inspired ales with her research partner Dave Paul, owner and brewer, at LoveShack Libations brewery in Qualicum Beach. This research engages and educates communities across Vancouver Island about the importance of community, ritual and power in

Archaeological communities around the world. The ultimate goal of her research and teaching is to put faces onto the past, using archaeological interpretations to bring the personality and humanity back to ancient evidence.



Marie is also on the Board of Directors of the Nanaimo Craft Beer Society after serving as President for the past two years. Through this role Marie focuses on events that highlight ancient beer and the role of women in the craft beer industry. Depending on the event, her focus is either making the past delicious, highlighting the women who brewed in the ancient past, as well as shining a light on the work of women brewers today. When not obsessing over archaeological evidence for brewing, Marie loves hanging out with her husband and son, making a mess of the kitchen cooking, making a mess throwing pottery, and avoiding cleaning up any of the messes left in her wake.



Adena Broadhead

Adena is the business mind behind Fig Love Clothing Co. Along with her business partner and mother, Heather Macleod, she has successfully navigated the growth of a tiny shop into a thriving and sustainable fashion destination in the heart of Nanaimo. Adena took the challenges of the pandemic and leveraged them into a launch pad, both weathering the Covid storm, and achieving new heights. By providing excellent and friendly client experiences, and accessing all the grants available, she has built up Fig Love's online presence, increased inventory, and now is ready to spread the message of natural fabrics and inclusive sizing both online and in person!

Adena has a background in corporate business and contract management, but left that life when she contracted early stage breast cancer at the age of 31. "My diagnosis caused me to take stock of my life, I realized that I couldn't die doing the job that I had". Through many surgeries, both mastectomy and reconstruction, she can now mentor and support other women going through the same thing, particularly those struggling with what to wear during their process. Adena is now recovered, and absolutely loves guiding women to feel whole and worthy.

Fig Love is an inclusive space, encouraging comfort and beauty in all sizes from XS-3X. This stems from Adena's personal experiences in a range of sizes, from M to 2X herself. The memories of only having 3 stores to shop in were challenged when she visited the Camden Street Market in London, and realized that gorgeous, fashion-forward pieces were available for her at every shop. She was stunned, and decided to bring that concept home to Vancouver Island. Enter Fig Love, where friends and family members of different sizes can shop together, side by side.

"I have people ask me whether it's difficult to work with the public. I replied "I don't work with the public, I work with my customers. Fig Love has the best customers in the world!""

Sonia Komen

Age 48

Owner/Operator of THE NANAIMO BAR

Established Feb 1, 2016

Living happy, making people happy, helping out in the community (other small businesses and/or groups)



Judy Stephan



Judy was born in South Africa and lived there until immigrating to Canada in 2009. She has a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in English and Psychology and holds a higher diploma in Education. In South Africa, Judy was a High School English teacher for 23 years, specializing in the teaching of English literature to Grade 12 students. She was the head of the English Department of 2 exclusive private colleges and was a recognized expert in the teaching of film and assisting second language students. Judy also produced the school newspapers and yearbooks.

Since Judy's arrival in Nanaimo and purchase of Nanaimo & Voyager Magazine, she has joined many community and networking organizations. Since 2010 she has been volunteering with the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce where she heads up the Ambassador Program and is presently Chair of the Board. She also served on the Downtown Nanaimo Business

Improvement Association Board (2012-2017), an Advisory Board for Nanaimo Family Life Association (2013-2019), was Vice President of Oceanside Rotary, is a board member at the Nanaimo Senior Services Network and served until very recently on the Old City Quarter Association Board. Judy is an active member of Women of Note, and has volunteered with Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society teaching English (2021-2022).

Judy has a passion for helping small businesses thrive, and loves to promote Nanaimo and the Island and thrives on calling this paradise, Vancouver Island, home. She proudly became a citizen in June 2015. Nanaimo's Voyager Magazine was in the top 3 Small Businesses at the Chamber Business Awards in 2014, a finalist in 2 categories in 2019 and won the Creative Services category in 2020. It was in the Top 10 Small Business BC Awards – Immigrant Entrepreneur Category in 2015, and Judy was nominated for a BC Multicultural award in November 2015, was winner of the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society's Community Leadership Award in 2019 and very recently won the Canadian Choice Award. Judy is married with 3 grown children, has recently become a grandmother, and has published 9 romance novels and a handbook to help new immigrants.

Susan Jarvis

Susan started her career as a volunteer 51 years ago with the Women of the Moose in Nanaimo, as a shy, insecure young lady who couldn't even speak her name in public. Through her 50 years as a member she achieved many degrees and rose to the top of the chain, eventually serving on an International Committee for 5 years. It gave her confidence, self esteem and made her realize she could do anything she set her mind to. One day in particular comes to mind when she had raised several thousand dollars for the Mother, Daughter Walk for the Heart and Stroke Foundation and on the same day raised another five thousand dollars for a friend who needed to go to the States for a special Cancer treatment. She couldn't attend the Walk, as she had to be at the other fundraiser so her daughters took her place. It was one of the best days of her life.

She has been the main person for the last 18 years with the BC Old Age Pensioners bringing their membership from eight members to 200 as of today. At the ripe age of 79 she still continues to serve our community through volunteerism and loves every moment of it.



Elizabeth Maybury

As a seasoned home inspector and entrepreneur, Elizabeth's journey began in her Dad's garage. Staying inside was never an option. It was always work on the tools with Dad or in the dirt outside maintaining her family's large property. In later years she developed a solid foundation in construction and architectural technology at Algonquin College. Prior to establishing her successful inspection company, she honed her skills through diverse experiences, managing a painting business while attending post secondary and contributing to construction projects in over three provinces, one notable stint being a grounds crew worker in the oil fields.

Elizabeth's commitment to excellence in the field led her to transition from construction to the meticulous realm of home inspection. With a wealth of knowledge acquired from academic training and hands-on experiences, she developed an acute eye for detail and a deep understanding of structural and other home related systems.

Driven by a passion for ensuring the safety and quality of homes, she has dedicated her career to guiding home sellers and buyers, and even some home builders, better understand the workings and condition of their homes. Through her expertise, integrity, and entrepreneurial spirit, she has not only built a thriving business but also contributed to eroding the stigma of women in the construction and building industry. She is honored to be considered for this award, reflecting her commitment to excellence in the world of home inspection.



Lansey Wiik

Meet the dedicated owner of ND-Pro Painting, a thriving business where excellence meets integrity. Known for unparalleled professionalism, she's earned a reputation as one of the best in the industry. Beyond the paintbrush, family and friends hold a special place in her heart, along with feline companions. A healthy lifestyle enthusiast, she finds joy in outdoor adventures, exploring new places and staying active through sports, particularly through baseball. Passionate about personal growth, you'll often find her engrossed in a good book, crafting poetry, or documenting life's journey through journaling. With a zest for culinary arts, she enjoys experimenting in the kitchen. Through Lansey's diverse passions and pursuits, she paints a vibrant picture of a well- rounded individual who cherishes both personal connections and the finer aspects of life.



Marisa Turner

"Act as though you own and take pride in the quality of your work, regardless of your job or position," echoes a guiding principle that defines Marisa Turner. Born on the Island and moving to Germany at the age of eight, Marisa made it her goal to return once she was 19. A 2022 VIU graduate with a Bachelor of Business Administration, Marisa swiftly transitioned from academia to entrepreneurship, founding Marisa Turner Design. Specializing in web design, SEO optimization, and marketing consultancy, her commitment to personalized service distinguishes her from quantity-focused agencies.



Beyond business, Marisa's influence extends through @Honey_WomenWhoWin, where she not only interviews successful female entrepreneurs but also spearheads community campaigns with local female-led businesses. She aims to broaden opportunities for the younger generation by initiating conversations about alternative career routes. This dynamic entrepreneur, molded by vast experience working in customer service since the age of 14 and a robust network cultivated through her journey, imparts advice inspired by influential figures, emphasizing ownership, resilience, and unwavering dedication to excellence.

With a love for both Canada and Europe, Marisa has fostered connections and expanded her reach beyond borders. As she envisions future growth for her ventures, she maintains her role as a trailblazer in business, embodying the spirit of empowerment for women in the professional landscape.

Keely Freeman

Keely Freeman is the founder and Executive Director of Nanaimo Innovation Academy. Education has long been a passion of hers. Keely is most interested in innovative teaching methods and practices, especially those involving hands-on learning in nature. After completing her degree in Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, she taught overseas in Korea, Taiwan and throughout South America. Casa Guatemala is school that Keely has continued to support since 2012. She has visited and lived in over 50 countries and can't wait to explore more.

When she first moved to Nanaimo in 2015, Keely worked at Island Oak High School, a Waldorf School in Duncan. She also supported the fundraising efforts at the Nanaimo Women's Centre. Before she moved to Nanaimo, she was one of the founding staff members who worked alongside Dr. David Strangway to create Quest University Canada, in Squamish. During her 14 years at Quest, Keely was responsible for admissions, enrollment, financial aid, and marketing. Prior to Quest, she worked at an experimental high school in Burnaby, a community school in Whistler, and with educational groups at a museum in Delta. Keely is proud to now call Nanaimo her home. She has two children, Bodhi (age 6) and Zane (age 7) who have employed her in her most challenging and rewarding profession yet –motherhood.

Leana Pellegrin

Leana is a proud school trustee of the Nanaimo Ladysmith school district, this governance role serves 15 thousand students including Cedar, Gabriola and Lantzville, and is the biggest employer in the region. Leana has also served on the board of NYSA (Nanaimo youth services) for 12 years, advocating for those with less and vulnerable folks is her passion, making sure sense of belonging is top of mind. As a boots on the ground meter reader for Fortis currently and BC Hydro previously for nearly 2 decades has her deeply connected to community chatting with people from all over, checking in on her favorite elderly customers, making friends and having meaningful connections over the years. Hearing people's stories and sharing some of her own in solidarity is of upmost importance. Leana has learned many beautiful teachings from 7 years on Syeyutsus (truth and reconciliation for the district) working with Snuneymuxw, Sna-naw-as and Stz'uminus nations listening, healing and walking together in a new way honouring the land with interconnection at its core. Leana is so grateful to live here with her family, surrounded in nature with regular swims in the Salish Sea.



Jovonne Johnson



Jovonne is the founder and one of the directors of RISEBRIDGE Project, a 3 year old grassroots non profit organization that is proposed to uplift social justice initiatives and provide short term tangible advocacy programs and support services for those vulnerable and marginalized in the mid island community, including warming centres and shelters, harm reduction outreach, Indigenous and queer youth programs, pre/post natal and family support services, recovery programs and advocacy against domestic violence and separation support available in Nanaimo and Oceanside. Jovonne moved to Nanaimo as a youth, to pursue education in Indigenous teachings and Child and Youth Care. She has since called the Island home, raising three children Kason, Koen, and Maria, dogmom to Texan and catmom to Kokashyn, worked with several nonprofit organizations throughout the years, went back to school to pursue further education in leadership and mental health and addictions, and ran her own women's empowerment and pre/post program on the Island for 8 years named MGI. Jovonne has worked in anti racism consulting and policy advocacy with all levels of leadership and government over the past decade. Often seen working or volunteering around the clock to ensure those in need are supported as best as possible in their times of crisis, and is known for her willingness to get uncomfortable and speak against harm that is occurring on a political or systems level. Her passion for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, along with advocacy for harm reduction initiatives and destigmatization of mental wellness and substance use has led her to live and breathe the role of community and social responsibility since her teenage years.

Jennifer Kemp

Jennifer Kemp is a dedicated advocate for service and community, with a diverse background that has shaped her into a leader in both the nonprofit and real estate sectors. Born in Vancouver and raised on the Sunshine Coast, she started her professional adventure at a young age. Her early years were filled with a diverse range of experiences, from assisting high-end retail customers to administration in law firms and innovative businesses. These formative experiences laid the foundation for her future endeavors. However, the most significant chapter in Jennifer's life began when she embraced motherhood in 2003. This transformative moment led her to rethink her career path. With some self reflection and training she launched her own business, At Your Best Image Consulting. To gain experience and launch her business she volunteered her services to organizations in Vancouver's Downtown East Side, showing her dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of those less fortunate. Additionally, she shared her knowledge by teaching at Vancouver Community College, inspiring others to reach their full potential. In 2009, Jennifer relocated to Nanaimo. There, she continued her Image Consulting business and expanded her horizons into the world of real estate and housing development. Her talents led her to design and build her family's home, then partnering with a developer in designing and building homes for others. Jennifer's desire to get more involved in community led her to join the Board of Big Brothers Big Sisters, eventually leading her to become the organization's President. Through a two-year succession plan and mentorship, she assumed the role of Executive Director, where she now aspires to guide the organization towards sustainable growth, leaving a lasting impact on the children and youth of Central Vancouver Island. Beyond her professional pursuits, Jennifer cherishes a balanced life. She finds joy in spending time with loved ones, connecting with nature, cooking, dancing, and nurturing her spiritual and personal development. She continues to embrace opportunities for learning and growth, ensuring her ongoing commitment to serving her community.



Karolien Soylu



Karolien Soylu is a newcomer to Nanaimo, having relocated with her husband and kids in September of 2021. She is very passionate about building strong, connected, and child-friendly communities. Just a month after moving, she spearheaded an initiative to bring a public playground to Harry Wipper Park. In just over two years, she has successfully raised over \$125,000 for the playground along with her project partner, Amie Armet. With the help of a little more fundraising, she anticipates being able to build the playground in the summer of 2024.

Karolien has also initiated many small neighbourhood projects, including a little free children's library, a pollinator workshop with Nanaimo Science, a community pool party at Kin Pool, and a children's bike parade. In addition, Karolien is the Chair of the Frank J Ney Elementary School PAC and is working hard to bring back a spirit of community to the school, which has suffered due to the pandemic. Last year, she successfully secured an \$8,000 grant for a diversity and inclusion themed theatre project in collaboration with Victoria's Story Theatre. She has also brought back to life a number of forgotten school events, most recently the school fun fair which had not been attempted in over 7 years.

Kix Citton

With a rich and varied career spanning over 25 years in the Impact (non-profit) sector, Kix Citton is celebrated for her dedication to innovation, collaboration, and inclusive leadership. With a background in public health, Kix applies her expertise in management, evaluation, and community development in her current capacity as the Executive Director of Nanaimo Brain Injury Society.

As a co-founder of a non-profit service co-operative and volunteer serving on the Board of Directors of the BC Brain Injury Association, Kix plays a pivotal role in promoting healthier and safer communities for all. Her notable contributions were acknowledged in 2021 when she was honored with the Leadership Award from the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce Business Awards.

Beyond her professional achievements, Kix embraces an active lifestyle while enjoying the outdoors. She loves exploring the scenic trails around Nanaimo or paddling with her dragonboat team. Kix is also committed to life-long learning, driving positive change through personal and professional development.





Crystal Dennison

Crystal Dennison is a devoted advocate with an unwavering commitment to fostering positive change in her community. Her dedication, extending over two decades in the charitable sector, exemplifies leadership driven by passion and compassion. For the past nine years, Crystal has served as the Executive Director of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Schools and continues to grow and learn in her work. In her role at NLSF, she is committed to helping students receive the support they need to be successful. Crystal believes that by helping to remove barriers to educational success, we can empower youth to create a better future for themselves. As a Runners of Compassion Board member, she volunteers with local trail runners to raise funds to help youth participate in sports. Beyond her impactful work, Crystal's adventurous spirit shines in her love of travel and outdoor pursuits, often found running, hiking, or backpacking in her spare time. Her ability to foster genuine connections with people stands out as one of life's greatest gifts, the giving and receiving of support and shared experiences is what makes her thrive. Crystal is a proud mother of three grown children, having gracefully embraced the empty nester stage of life.



Andrea Thomas

Andrea Thomas is a dynamic and multi-faceted professional, currently excelling in her role as Manager of Engagement, Content, and Cruise Development at the Port of Nanaimo. She has a deep commitment to community development and philanthropy within her beloved city of Nanaimo. Andrea has raised almost \$300,000 for the Cops for Cancer Tour de Rock. She donated 12 pieces of her original artwork to the Nanaimo Foundation for auction raising \$14,400 and has hosted fundraising events for the Great Nanaimo Toy Drive, to support our local kids.

Beyond her fundraising endeavors, Andrea volunteers with Adapt Island, showcasing her commitment to inclusivity and accessibility in community services. Her leadership skills and strategic insights have earned her a position on the Board of the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance (VIEA), where she contributes to regional economic development. As Vice President of the Young Professionals of Nanaimo, she fosters a network of emerging leaders, encouraging professional growth and community engagement among her peers.

Andrea also serves on a Workforce Recruitment and Retention Committee, where she addresses critical employment challenges and contributes to the development of a robust local workforce. Her passion for Nanaimo is a common thread in all her endeavors, reflecting her dedication to enhancing the quality of life in her community. Andrea Thomas is not just a professional in her field; she is a beacon of civic engagement and an embodiment of the spirit of community service.

Kaitlyn Brown

Kaitlyn Brown, aka Scouter Sunshine, is known for her dedication to the Scouting community. She plays a key role as contact Scouter taking on various extra responsibilities. Kaitlyn has helped train Scouters from across Vancouver Island. Kaitlyn is known for her cheerfulness, promoting inclusion, endless singing and has received many service awards.

Kaitlyn is extremely passionate about Scouting as she attributes many of her life values, leadership skills and community focus to growing up in Scouting. Knowing how much Scouting can impact someone positively, inspires her to continue giving back.

Kaitlyn is also an Autism advocate. She is openly Autistic to help spread Autism acceptance. Kaitlyn is passionate about assisting families during their assessment journey. She assists families with critical knowledge during this stressful and complicated process, as it's easy to be misdiagnosed. Kaitlyn volunteers her time in hopes that more youth will benefit from receiving a proper diagnosis. This can help them gain the support they deserve and understanding about themselves which can truly change an individual's life, much like her own. Kaitlyn has coached over 100 individuals in obtaining a diagnosis.

Kaitlyn looks forward to continuing to make a difference in her own unique way.



Nicole Jensen

Nicole is a wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend and leader. She moved to Nanaimo over seven years ago with her husband and has loved it here ever since. In 2018, after many years of trying to conceive, they welcomed twin boys. One of her sons, Lucas, was born with five congenital heart defects. On his fifth day of life, Lucas underwent his first heart surgery followed by an emergency stent placement. Fast forward to today and after three heart surgeries, Lucas is a thriving five year old. It brings Nicole so much joy to see him running around with boundless energy. She is a strong supporter of BC Children's Hospital Foundation and Ronald MacDonald House.

Nicole has completed her Bachelor of Business Administration degree plus additional courses in leadership. She undertook a leadership role with Island Health in 2022 and enjoys supporting her team members to meet all of their goals. Nicole has a long history of volunteering and community support and currently is involved with her children's parent advisory council at school. She loves trying to find ways to make people's days a bit brighter and her love language is food.





Sarah Bingham

Sarah has called Vancouver Island her home for almost 20 years now and is constantly in awe of the beauty and abundance this place has to offer. She is a mother to a beautiful daughter and their dog, Odin. She spends most of her time outdoors, skiing, paddle-boarding and exploring as much of this island as she can.

Sarah is a trained Red Seal Chef and a Holistic Nutritionist. She loves using local ingredients and foraging or growing her own as much as possible. Sarah specializes in vegetarian cooking, focusing on encouraging and inspiring people to get excited about eating vegetables!

Sarah is passionate about the outdoors and is additionally a Certified Forest Therapy Guide. The forest is where she feels absolutely at home and has been using it for her own health and wellness for many years. Sarah truly believes that forest and food are both huge tools in our journey of healing. They are both medicines that are readily available to us on a daily basis.

Sarah believes we are meant to be living in relationship with Mother Earth and follow the ebbs and flows of each season.

Sharon Lynn Hagen

Sharon Lynn Hagen's journey is a testament to her unwavering dedication to the world of music and community service. Born in Calgary and a resident of Nanaimo since 1977, Sharon's love for the outdoors and volunteering blossomed during her youth, marked by softball games and community engagement.

Post high school, Sharon delved into the hospitality industry, but her life took a profound turn on September 10th, 1988, with the birth of her son, Myles Young. As a single parent, Sharon tirelessly supported Myles, working at The Nanaimo Golf Club while passionately engaging in community volunteering and benefit events.

When Myles developed an interest in playing the guitar, Sharon embraced the role of a dedicated "Band Mom," ferrying him to lessons and hauling musical equipment. Eager to understand the music industry, Sharon immersed herself in volunteering at various music events, eventually evolving into an accomplished Event Coordinator.

Sharon's expertise led her to coordinate major festivals like "Party In The Park," "Bathtub Weekend," and "Sunfest." Now a prominent Music Promoter at The Queens Nanaimo, Sharon extends her influence, bringing music shows and events to stages across Vancouver Island and the Mainland. She takes immense pride in hosting her son's band, "Under The Mountain," and eagerly anticipates their 4th record release party, a testament to Sharon's enduring commitment to the power of music.



Jen Wynia

Owner/Founder of Wynd Media Company, providing Real Estate Media services.

Wife and mother. Enjoys spending time with her family.

Previously spent 12 years in the Financial Services Industry.

Has a degree in Business with VIU.

Left her corporate job 6 years ago to pursue her dream of self-employment and the desire to build something of her own. During that time, discovered her love of photography and working with her creative side and started Wynd Media Company.

A cancer diagnosis left Jen re-evaluating what's important in life. It lit a fire for her to try new things and continue to grow and show up for life in fulfilling and authentic ways.

She discovered her love of the adventuring outdoors, particularly the backcountry. She has taken up hiking, skiing, kayaking, and mountain biking. She takes her camera with her on most adventures and tries to capture the beauty of it all. She shares these adventures on social media in hopes of inspiring others to get out and try new things or just to get out! There is an entire community of wonderful people doing these things and it's very good for the mind, body and soul.



Ophélie Kacoutié

Ophelie is a junior Geotechnical engineer who works full-time at Tetrattech Nanaimo. She has a degree in civil engineering from the University of Calgary. In her spare time, Ophelie provides amazing braids and hairstyles to the community. She pays attention to the smallest details, including color blending, neatness, and speed, without ever feeling rushed. She is a Godsend to Nanaimo as she is the best braider in town with a unique style and the ability to work with all hair textures. Ophelie is changing the braiding game in Nanaimo by promoting diversity and breaking the barrier of cultural appropriation. She believes that everyone can be beautiful with whatever style they prefer, as long as it makes them happy.



Lauren Semple

Lauren Semple stands as a dynamic force at the intersection of inclusion, advocacy, project management, and the arts.

Serving as the President of the Nanaimo Pride Society, Lauren is deeply committed to fostering diverse and vibrant communities while uplifting the representation and status of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

In their professional life, Lauren is known for delivering impactful results, whether consulting in their sole proprietorship or painting murals as part of Humanity In Art. With a distinctive blend of creativity, energy, and an impact-driven approach, they assemble specialized experts, form collaborative teams, and connect community.



Lauren's work spans various sectors, primarily focusing on tourism, arts, culture, inclusion, and special projects. Amidst the challenges of the pandemic, she played a pivotal role in architecting the Vancouver Island and BC Tourism Resiliency Networks. This work paved the way for subsequent achievements, including Lauren's development and delivery of the BC Tourism Sustainability Network in partnership with Destination BC's Tourism Climate Resiliency Initiative.

Lauren's consulting services offer a community-centred approach to diversity and inclusion, focusing on 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and training. Additionally, she works with the Tourism Nanaimo team to support inclusive destination development.

As a professional artist, Lauren has spent over a decade creating in both the performing and visual realms.

Kristen Ahumada-Azcarraga

Kristen Azcarraga is the co-owner and pharmacist at the Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy at Departure Bay Road in Nanaimo since 2012. She and her husband Mel, co-own the Medicine Shoppe in Nanaimo and Parksville.

Written by her husband Mel. "Kristen- born on Christmas Day, an Inspiring Life Story of an Influential Woman".

A story of triumph from breaking barriers of poverty/financial difficulties to a successful career and business. It is a story of a Filipina leaving comfort zone and cultural barriers by moving from the Philippines to Canada so she can support her family in the Philippines. A story of a determined woman who challenged herself from adversity during closing of her employment at Zellers and made it into opportunity for a better outcome by opening her own business-The Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy. A story of a kind-hearted person who are constantly supporting biological/adoptive families in the Philippines and Canada. A story of a compassionate pharmacist who always listen to her patients and tried her best to make them feel better at the same time providing high quality patient care. A story of a woman who constantly juggling multiple hats- a mom, a wife, a pharmacist, a business owner/manager, a friend, a sister and a lot more. She always tries her best to make time when she's needed. This is her story...

Kristen was born in December 25,1976. Born in the Philippines from a not financially stable family. She graduated from one of the top public science high school, "Manila Science High School" in the Philippines so she can get a high quality government funded education in high school in preparation for her university degree. She finished Bachelor of Science in Industrial Pharmacy at University of the Philippines, one of the top government-funded universities in her home country. While studying, she has to work in different school departments as student assistant so she can support herself financially and her family. At the same time, she has to study harder and get high grades so she can keep her scholarship and school financial aid. She graduated Bachelor of Science in in Industrial Pharmacy 1999 and made it to 10th place in the Pharmacy Board Examination in the Philippines. She almost finished her Masters degree in Biostatistics but she has to move to Canada when she is about to finish her thesis writing. She moved to Canada in 2003 when she attended the bridging program for foreign trained pharmacists at University of Toronto before she moved to Nanaimo as a pharmacist at Zellers/Hudson's Bay. She was assigned as staff pharmacist at Zellers Pharmacy in Nanaimo from 2005 to 2012. In 2012 Zellers stores closed, Kristen and her husband opened her first pharmacy in Nanaimo (The Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy at Departure Bay) while her two girls are 2 and 4. And in 2019, they acquired a well-established pharmacy in Parksville (The Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy Parksville).

As a member of the Filipino community when working in the pharmacy, she is constantly involved helping the Filipino and Nanaimo community in whatever ways they need her for such as health advice, navigating the healthcare system, referral to other resources. She became almost like a hub for many resources in Nanaimo. While managing the pharmacy on a daily basis, she was also involved in the community by providing Health and Wellness Presentations to



different organizations in the community. These are: Nanaimo Affordable Housing Society (Buttertubs, Corlett, Prideaux and Selby Place), Nanaimo Senior Services Network, BC Legion, BC Old age Pensioners and Seniors Organization Nanaimo Branch, Stroke Recovery Association of BC Nanaimo Branch, First Open Heart Society of BC Nanaimo Branch, Nanaimo Health and Wellness-Island Health, Longlake Chateau residents, Nanaimo Brain Injury Society, CMHA Nanaimo Branch, Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society, St. Peter's and Trinity Catholic Church, St. Paul's Anglican Church.

She was also actively involved in in-house vaccination clinics in different groups, senior communities, churches and non-profit organizations that are mentioned above. She was also one of the authors of their own pharmacy community initiative called "Pharmacy at Home Program" with the aim of providing pharmacy services directly to the patient such as house calls/home visits, vaccinations, medication management, and medication reviews. As a pharmacist, she is passionate with helping patient especially those who are more vulnerable such as seniors, patient with mental health, marginalized groups, and members of the LGBTQIA2s+. She always deliver quality patient care with no judgement.

As a mentor, she was actively involved in training international pharmacist to help them build confidence and knowledge and successfully pass the Canadian Pharmacist Examinations. She also trained most of her staff so they will be more confident in their chosen career and also develop a very good work ethics especially the part time student staff. As Employer/Owner, she employed a combination of men and women form different background such young women/students, staff who were injured as healthcare or trade worker who need transition job until they get their new fitting jobs, newcomers to Canada and more. Her goal is to get help from them as the staff on a daily basis and at the same time giving them opportunity to work to support their daily living. Because of her hard work and dedication, comes with a reward. On her leadership in the pharmacy, she has received numerous recognitions. Among the awards are the following:

- Age-Friendly Business in Nanaimo -2018
- Nominated for Community Leadership Award- Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society-2019
- Community Connection Award- The Medicine Shoppe Canada Owner's Conference-2019
- Community Votes 2023 Nanaimo- (Pharmacy/Drugstore)- Platinum and Gold Award-2023

She has a type A personality but also a very down to earth woman who always has something to offer in her profession and private life. A strong and caring mom to her kids and a loving wife to her husband.



April Hilland

Introducing April Hilland: A Teacher-Librarian, Best-Selling Children's Author, and Senior Editor for the Van Isle Poetry Collective. With over 15 years of experience in school libraries, April's passion for diverse stories shines through her tireless advocacy in children's literature. Beyond her school library, she captivates young minds with thoughtful and entertaining picture books while championing inclusivity. As a senior editor, she amplifies poets voices, shaping the literary landscape on Vancouver Island. When not immersed in education or literature, April finds joy in jazz and lyrical dance.

Amanda Scott

Amanda Scott, founder of the Vault Café in Nanaimo, embarked on a mission to cultivate an artistic haven within the heart of the city. Opening its doors in January 2014, the café swiftly evolved into a thriving hub for creativity, hosting a spectrum of events from open mic nights to poetry readings, live music, and book launches. Scott's vision materialized, earning her the prestigious Emerging Cultural Leader Award from the City of Nanaimo, a testament to the café's early success. Passionate about fostering a vibrant social atmosphere, Scott not only facilitates diverse events but also showcases and sells local artwork and music without taking any cut from the artists and musicians. The Vault Café has become a beacon in Nanaimo's downtown, prompting Scott to advocate for transforming vacant buildings into temporary spaces for local artists. With a relentless work ethic and a supportive family, Scott envisions a future where more empty spaces in downtown Nanaimo are revitalized, echoing the success of her beloved café.

Marysia Nowak

Marysia (mar-ee-sha) Nowak (no vak) is a Polish Canadian woman, a dynamic business owner and passionate community member. Having moved to Nanaimo 6 years ago she quickly fell in love with the rich tapestry of nature, people, memory and potential of this land - which is the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. Nanaimo was where she gained the confidence to define the life she wanted for her and her family; and this brought her to becoming an entrepreneur. Marysia initially established Bee Inks Printing: a home-based arts business, creating captivating designs inspired by the natural beauty and intricacies of the island. Through this venture, she not only honed her skills but also imbibed valuable lessons, shaping her path towards her current and thriving endeavor. Marysia, alongside her life partner Elijah Belway, now owns an online shop catering to customers in both British Columbia and Alberta. Their business, Serving Simple Solutions, stands as a testament to their commitment to community, simplicity, and sustainability. Marysia has learned to exemplify the spirit of entrepreneurship, weaving a narrative of success rooted in human connection, deep appreciation for the local environment and a dedication to serving the community with thoughtful and sustainable solutions.



Shauna Root



Shauna, an interior design expert since 1996, specializes in crafting transformative experiences within workplace and public spaces. Her proficiency spans boutique offices to luxury resorts, showcasing a commitment to efficiency and project management. Shauna excels in leading integrated, multi-disciplinary teams, emphasizing collaboration with clients and consultants.

Beyond her project successes, Shauna imparts her passion for human-centered and sustainable design as a part-time Interior Design Instructor at BCIT. Armed with a Bachelor of Interior Design from the University of Manitoba School of Architecture, she remains dedicated to continuous learning in building codes, project management, and sustainability.

Shauna's design philosophy centres around the seamless integration of aesthetic appeal with practical functionality. Her enduring commitment to creating meaningful environments establishes her as a driving force in the field.

In 2021, Shauna made a deliberate move back to Nanaimo, embracing a quieter life closer to family. In her leisure, she finds joy in hiking and planning adventures with her partner, Eric. Shauna's multifaceted journey and unwavering commitment make her an outstanding figure in the world of interior design.

Talela Manson

Talela Manson, a proud Snuneymuxw member and passionate soccer enthusiast, leaves an indelible mark as a peer mentor for Indigenous youth. Her impact resonates through genuine care and empathy, extending beyond academic guidance to preserve cultural identity and nurture a profound sense of belonging. Her transformative journey from a camp participant to a camp counselor at VIU's Thuy'she'num Tu Smun'eem exemplifies her commitment to mentorship and inclusivity.

Talela's legacy is deeply embedded in her role as a camp counselor, where her contributions are immeasurable. By drawing from the wisdom of good mentors at the camp and her grandfather, VIU Elder-in-residence Gary Manson, she actively cultivates a supportive and inclusive culture. Through her heart, presence, and unwavering commitment to be the change she wishes to see, Talela heals generational lines, creating a ripple effect that inspires others to be more, do more, and mentor more.

Delving into the world of writing, Talela expands her influence, actively championing the highlighting of Indigenous stories. Recognizing the importance of shared experiences, she creates a network that enriches understanding, becoming a role model for Indigenous writers and dispelling historical fears associated with education for Indigenous students. In Talela's words, sharing stories is a powerful tool for learning, especially in a post-secondary environment where Indigenous voices are crucial. Having overcome the historical fear of education in her family, Talela, now a university student, navigates academia while becoming a guiding light for others. Her journey from fearing post-secondary education to trailblazing in her family exemplifies resilience and determination, breaking the cycle of uncertainty surrounding education in Indigenous communities.

Talela's legacy extends beyond personal achievements; it is the echo of her voice, resonating forever in the hearts of her people and beyond.





Sarah Bramley

Create. Inspire. Impact.

Sarah Bramley has been employed within the non-profit sector for almost two decades. She has been instrumental in significantly increasing the volunteer activities for organizations, plus raising the profile and financial contributions to all organizations she has worked with. Finding means to better the community are passionate objectives for Sarah. She has been engaged with community non-profit organizations for twenty years and developed sustainable social services that support and create a stronger community.

Sarah has previously served as a Board member for many organizations such as Volunteer Nanaimo and Girls Guides of Canada. She served as the Director of Partnership Relations for the National MBA Games Organizing Committee. Additionally, she has civic government experience having served on two City of Nanaimo committees.

In Nanaimo, Sarah created a fundraising effort in the form of an annual event called The Big Wheel Charity Golf Classic, which has raised over \$150,000 within its first two years of existence in 2022 and 2023, as well as being the lead organizer for the annual "Seafood Extravaganza", which raised in excess of \$1,000,000 over a 10-year period.

Sarah has a passion to imagine and create innovative solutions that will affect positive and powerful change for the betterment of her community. Chosen as one of Canada's top 150 philanthropists who work and volunteer in the country's social sector in 2017, Sarah's philanthropic efforts also extend to international achievements by leading teams, through Habitat for Humanity globally, to developing countries in order to help build homes.

Samantha Gurvin

Born and raised on the West Coast, Samantha loves every part of what makes the Central Island area so exquisite. It has been her dream come true to settle in Qualicum Beach with her spouse Christopher, and raise their son close to the ocean, along with her fur family, a cat and two dogs. Samantha is invested in her community with a career of over ten years in Workplace Health and Safety, she participates in a number community events and sits on the Nanaimo Road Safety Committee on behalf of her employer. Samantha has also served for two years as the President of the Nanaimo area roller derby club called "Harbour City Rollers" which strives to create a gender inclusive team sport environment serving folks in the Mid Island area. Samantha enjoys walks on the beach with her family, charcuterie and red wine, and waking up beside her smiling baby boy each morning.



Women of Influence
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