

2026 COMMUNITY AWARDEE - BACKGROUNDERS

Damineh Akhavan, West Vancouver

Damineh Akhavan, P.Eng., is an aerospace engineer, advocate, and longstanding volunteer with extensive experience across governance, regulatory, and community organizations. She is the Co-founder and CEO of Global Women in STEM, advancing equity and human rights in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through education, advocacy, and action.

Her service spans local, provincial, national, and global organizations, including the West Vancouver Police Board, Engineers and Geoscientists BC, Engineers Canada, HR MacMillan Space Centre, UN Women, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, Healthcare Excellence Canada, and advisory roles at the University of Victoria and Capilano University. Her contributions focus on governance, policy, mentorship, youth outreach, and advancing diverse representation.

Damineh advocates for gender equity in leadership, including pay equity and inclusive board representation. She also works to address gender-based violence through community engagement, storytelling, and sharing lived experiences of workplace harassment and discrimination. She is committed to making STEM accessible to youth through mentorship and outreach initiatives. Her work has been recognized through a range of honours acknowledging her contributions across sectors.

Kit Ashenhurst, Kaslo

Kit Ashenhurst is a central figure in the village of Kaslo, recognized for his leadership in heritage restoration and public infrastructure. He played a key role in the multiyear rehabilitation of the SS Moyie, Canada's oldest intact passenger sternwheeler and a National Historic Site. At a critical stage of deterioration, Kit coordinated volunteers, tradespeople, and specialists, contributing engineering expertise, managing logistics, and supporting fundraising efforts to advance the restoration.

As restoration coordinator and lead project manager, Kit guided major phases of work, including structural stabilization, re-canvassing of the ship's weather envelope, and essential carpentry repairs. His work ensured the vessel's long-term preservation and safe public access, with the site now welcoming approximately 12,000 visitors annually. In 2024, the SS Moyie restoration received a BC Heritage Conservation Award, recognizing the significance of this effort.

Kit has also mentored youth and volunteers in heritage trades, strengthening local skills and capacity. In addition to his restoration work, he contributes to community life as a musician, often playing Irish flute at local gatherings and events in Kaslo.

John Kehinde Atoyebi, Vancouver

John K. Atoyebi is a dual-licensed lawyer, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) professional whose work spans community initiatives, governance, and public service. He is the founder of the British Columbia Black Advocacy Society, which connects individuals and families with resources and support, and of the African-Canadian Agricultural Producers Cooperative, which advances access to culturally relevant food. He also led the “Black Voices in Democracy” summit, mobilizing Black civic engagement across the province.

His governance roles include serving as Secretary of the Vancouver General Hospital Thrift Store Board and participating on advisory bodies such as the City of Vancouver Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee and the Vancouver Heritage Commission (2024). He also mentors individuals navigating systems like immigration, employment, and education, and organizes mentorship opportunities for youth and professionals.

John works as an Investigator with the BC Ombudsperson, focusing on administrative fairness and promoting accountability in public-sector organizations. His background includes legal practice, judicial administration, human rights, and consulting, as well as serving as a Magistrate and District Court Judge in Nigeria and working as a court clerk and EDI Consultant advising public institutions in British Columbia.

Anita Atwal, K.C., Surrey

Anita Kaur Atwal, K.C., is a labour, employment, and human rights lawyer and founder of Anita Atwal Law. Her practice focuses on workplace investigations, mediations, and professional discipline, and she advises organizations on governance, ethics, equity, and inclusion. She serves as Integrity Commissioner for the City of Maple Ridge and as an ad hoc Integrity Commissioner for other local governments.

Her contributions to public service extend through several board roles. She serves on the Board of the Fraser Health Authority, where she chairs the Human Resources and Governance Committee and co-chairs the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Committee of the Indigenous Health Collaborative Council. She is also a board member of the Organized Crime Agency of BC and chairs its Human Resources Committee. Previously, she served as Board Member and Chair of the HR & Governance Committee at BC Infrastructure Benefits, supporting workforce development initiatives and engagement with Indigenous communities, women, and underrepresented groups in skilled trades.

Her leadership includes being the longest-serving President and Director of the South Asian Bar Association of BC, where she advanced mentorship and continuing education initiatives for racialized legal professionals. She has also held leadership roles at Simon Fraser University as the Principal Consultant (Interim Director), Human Rights, contributing to policy development addressing systemic inequities. She is a frequent speaker and mentor within the legal and broader professional community.

Simon Baker, Squamish Nation

Simon Baker is a relationship-driven negotiator and cultural advocate from the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation). He is also the host of *The New Energy*, a web-based documentary series developed through a collaboration between Simon, Tanya Laing-Gahr at FortisBC, and RealWorld Media Inc. The series highlights First Nations-led economic, energy, and cultural initiatives across British Columbia. As part of this work, Simon travels to communities throughout the province, documenting local projects, sharing community perspectives, and showcasing partnership-based approaches to development.

The New Energy builds on Simon's earlier collaboration with RealWorld Media on the international documentary series *Native Planet*. Through these productions, he has contributed to storytelling that reflects Indigenous knowledge, community priorities, and lived experiences.

In addition to his media work, Simon supports initiatives that strengthen relationships between Indigenous organizations and industry. This includes partnership development, sponsorship engagement, and public awareness efforts, including involvement with the Orange Shirt Society. His focus is on building connections across nonprofit, public, and corporate sectors to advance Indigenous-led initiatives and reconciliation. He is now extending this work through Baker Brothers Strategic Partnership and Advisory, a new venture focused on values-driven collaboration.

Varun Banthia, Vancouver

***Emerging Leader**

Varun Banthia is an emerging leader who demonstrates a sustained commitment to public service and support for vulnerable populations. He has focused his efforts on advancing equity, accountability, and access within public institutions and nonprofit organizations.

As Chair of the Board of PHS Community Services Society, one of the province's largest providers of supportive housing and harm reduction services, Varun has provided oversight in a complex environment. His work with those facing homelessness, mental health challenges, and substance use disorders has additionally included volunteering at the Dugout Drop-In Centre and on the frontlines of the toxic drug crisis at the Overdose Prevention Society.

Visually impaired since birth, Varun has participated in the City of Vancouver's Disability Advisory Committee. He has also empowered his young peers through involvement with UBC's Ch'nook Aboriginal Management Program and research projects at Deloitte amplifying Indigenous youth perspectives.

Professionally, grounded in the belief that transparent and ethical institutions are essential to fair outcomes for those most at risk, Varun has focused on improving integrity and effectiveness in the public sector. After gaining experience at the OECD and the UN, he now supports the whistleblower program at Vancouver's Office of the Auditor General.

Mariel (č'ń č'ń) Belanger, Okanagan Indian Band / Syilx Nation

Mariel (č'ń č'ń) Belanger is a Syilx interdisciplinary performance artist, entrepreneur, and doctoral student in Cultural Studies at Queen's University. Her practice centers on land-based arts, storytelling, and the transmission of Syilx knowledge systems through contemporary and traditional forms.

She is the founder of Studio sisp'lk' Gallery, an Indigenous-led social enterprise delivering land-based cultural arts projects, food forest initiatives, and workshops focused on reconciliation, education, and community engagement. By offering in-person and virtual programming, the gallery advances cultural tourism and provides meaningful, hands-on experiences grounded in Syilx traditions.

For over two decades, Mariel has contributed to the Okanagan arts community, supporting emerging and established artists and mentoring Indigenous youth. Through her work with organizations such as the Sookinchoot Youth Centre, she has provided media arts programming, after-school initiatives, and skills development, encouraging youth to build relationships with each other and the land through harvesting, making, and participatory learning. Mariel also contributes to arts governance through jury and board service and is a founding member of Sqilxw Apna and Kama? Creative Aboriginal Arts Collective.

Don Blakely, Armstrong

Don Blakely is a founding member and longtime leader in Search and Rescue (SAR), with nearly four decades of dedicated volunteer service beginning in Fort Nelson in 1987 and continuing in Vernon since 1995. With a background in military service and law, he brought strong organizational and administrative expertise to the field, supporting both operational and governance functions from the outset.

As Team Leader, Rope Rescue Team Leader, and Search Manager with Vernon Search and Rescue, Don has participated in hundreds of operations, including large-scale emergencies such as the evacuation of 7,000 residents during the 1998 Salmon Arm wildfire. Over more than 20 years as a Search Manager, he led complex, multi-agency responses and missing persons searches across the region.

At the provincial and national levels, Don has contributed extensively through leadership with the BC Search and Rescue Association and the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada. He also played a key role in developing and teaching training programs that continue to shape SAR practices today. Through mentorship and collaboration, Don has strengthened SAR capacity and professionalism across Canada.

Andrea Castro, Langley

Andrea Castro is the founder of Forever Kind, an initiative dedicated to creating inclusive public environments where every child is recognized, understood, and valued. Through her work, she develops practical, community-based solutions that support children of all abilities in communicating, connecting, and participating in shared spaces.

Her work began with a simple goal: to create environments where her daughter, Ariyana, could engage and belong. In public spaces, Andrea observed that children were eager to connect but often lacked shared communication tools. In response, she designed Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) boards integrating AAC-friendly visuals, sign-supported language, literacy cues, and emotional regulation supports. What began as a single prototype has grown into a province-wide initiative, with tools now installed in parks, playgrounds, schools, recreation centres, and community hubs across British Columbia.

Through Forever Kind, Andrea collaborates with speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, educators, municipalities, community partners and the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) to advance inclusive design. She also serves on the Township of Langley Parks & Design Committee and the City of Langley Accessibility & Inclusion Committee, contributing to local planning and policy while supporting communities in building accessible, inclusive social infrastructure.

Carl Cavanagh, Victoria

As a senior staff member for 15 years at the Central Branch of the Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL), Carl Cavanagh supported diverse community needs in a busy downtown environment. He built partnerships with frontline organizations such as the Mustard Seed Food Bank and Our Place Society, bringing “pop-up libraries” to their clients and expanding access to books for underserved populations.

Carl is also recognized for establishing and sustaining a volunteer-run library at the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC), which has been in place since 2011. Working in collaboration with GVPL, Russell Books, Bastion Books, the *Times-Colonist*, the Books to Prisoners organization of Vancouver, and many generous community donors, he helped develop a broad collection of fiction and non-fiction titles of all kinds.

The VIRCC library operates without a dedicated budget for staff or materials and now holds nearly 6,000 volumes. Each month, approximately 1,000 books are circulated among the prison’s living units, with inmates able to request materials to support their education, personal development, and recreation. Carl’s leadership brought together multiple partners to create a lasting resource within the facility.

Cecilia Ching Yee Leung, Vancouver

Cecilia Ching Yee Leung is a long-serving volunteer with a culturally based community policing centre in Vancouver's Chinatown. Widely regarded as a central connector within the organization, she supports programs that strengthen relationships between the Vancouver Police Department and the Chinese community, including Victim Services, Citizens' Report, translation, outreach, and Chinatown Watch, and more.

Contributing approximately 150 to 200 hours annually, Cecilia plays a key leadership role in organizing events, mentoring new volunteers, advising board members, and participating in stakeholder meetings. She is actively involved in community engagement, including outreach to local businesses, attending public forums, addressing racial harassment, and supporting initiatives that address public safety and community well-being in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside.

Cecilia's volunteer service spans more than two decades and includes roles with the Alzheimer Society of BC, St. John the Apostle Parish, and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Western Canada) Association. She brings this experience to her work, contributing to programs such as art therapy and wellness initiatives for seniors that encourage volunteerism and active aging.

Jacquelyn Cragg, West Vancouver

Jacquelyn Cragg is an Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia, a Canada Research Chair, and an internationally recognized scientist whose work bridges research and community impact. Alongside her academic contributions, she is known for advancing mentorship initiatives that support youth affected by violence and adversity.

Drawing on lived experience, Jacquelyn founded and leads *Fostering Science* (est. 2020) and *Resilience with Research* (est. 2024), two federally funded programs in British Columbia that connect youth with mentors and hands-on learning in science. These initiatives provide pathways into post-secondary education and careers, while fostering confidence, curiosity, and a sense of belonging. Through partnerships with educators, researchers, and community organizations, she has developed a sustainable, trauma-informed model for science outreach.

Since 2010, she has served as a judge at local and national science fairs, supporting students from diverse backgrounds through meaningful engagement and encouragement. At UBC, she is recognized for mentoring graduate students who excel in research and demonstrate strong leadership and community engagement. Through her combined work in research, education, and outreach, Jacquelyn has contributed to expanding access to science and creating supportive learning environments for youth across the province.

Dr. Ramneek Dosanjh, Delta

Dr. Ramneek Dosanjh is a physician and hospitalist whose work spans healthcare, advocacy, and governance. As President of Doctors of BC, she advanced equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, including the first Physician Master Agreement to incorporate gender equity and Indigenous cultural safety and humility. She also signed the inaugural Memorandum of Understanding on Indigenous-specific anti-racism and continues to serve on its working committee. Her contributions have supported primary care reform, including being a part of the development of the longitudinal family physician payment model.

Ramneek currently serves as Executive Vice President, North America, for the Medical Women's International Association. She is also the Past President of the Federation of Medical Women of Canada and a member of its Sexual and Reproductive Health and Human Rights Committee. She has presented at international forums, including the United Nations, and has mentored a generation of students from minority and underrepresented groups.

Bridging healthcare and legal systems to better support families navigating the justice system, she co-founded the Health and Justice Alliance, and led initiatives focused on child and youth mental health. Her governance roles have included Child Health BC, the White Rock–South Surrey Division of Family Practice, and the BC Coroners Service's Toxic Drug Supply Steering Committee and the Provincial Digital Health steering committee. Ramneek is also the author of *Dreamland*, a children's book about connection also adopted into palliative care settings and Canuck Place.

Beatrice Frank, Victoria

Beatrice Frank is a conservation social scientist whose work is rooted in community leadership, collective stewardship, and care for both people and nature. For nearly three decades, she has worked alongside communities, supporting locally driven efforts to protect biodiversity, strengthen public engagement, and shape more inclusive approaches to governance across terrestrial and marine environments. Her work emphasizes the connections between healthy ecosystems and thriving, resilient communities.

Her career includes senior roles with the Capital Regional District Regional Parks and WWF Canada, and she is proud to be now the Executive Director of the Georgia Strait Alliance. She is also a board member of the Coexisting with Carnivores Alliance and contributes as an adjunct faculty member and independent social science specialist. Across these roles, her work prioritizes collaboration with Indigenous Nations and local communities, advancing participatory approaches that centre community voices, knowledge systems, and leadership in conservation and decision-making.

Through her leadership, she has helped bring together Indigenous Nations, residents, stakeholders, stewardship groups, and partner organizations to collaboratively address shared priorities such as ecosystem protection and species recovery. She is deeply committed to

building capacity within communities by developing workshops, toolkits, and learning opportunities that support volunteers and emerging practitioners, while fostering inclusive, community-based spaces that broaden participation in environmental stewardship and justice.

Rosaline Glynn, Port Hardy

Rosaline Glynn is a dedicated volunteer who has strengthened connections and improved quality of life for seniors across North Vancouver Island. She served on the Hardy Bay Senior Citizens' Society Board for many years, including as Chair from 2017 to 2024, where she led a period of significant growth, expanding membership from approximately 70 to over 300.

Under her leadership, the Society developed a wide range of programs and partnerships, including weekly meal programs, educational workshops, community events, and outreach initiatives that increased access, inclusion, and social connection for seniors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Rosaline coordinated rapid response efforts, including meal delivery, wellness check-ins, transportation support, and a volunteer phone network to address isolation and ensure members remained connected and supported.

Rosaline has contributed to numerous organizations, including the North Island Seniors Housing Foundation, Mount Waddington Health Network, and the Seniors Elders Better Living Advisory Committee, the Community Response Network, and the Port Hardy Hospital Auxiliary. In 2024, she joined the Port Hardy Heritage Society Board. Her work has been recognized with honours including Volunteer of the Year and the Seniors Hero Award, reflecting her leadership in building collaborative, community-based supports. In 2025, she received the King Charles III Coronation Medal for her work with seniors.

Kobe Li, Vancouver

***Emerging Leader**

Kobe Li is an emerging leader and Co-Founder of 20/20 Mission, a British Columbia-based nonprofit dedicated to improving access to vision care worldwide while engaging youth in meaningful community action. What began as a student-led initiative, inspired by his own experience with high myopia, has grown into a province-wide effort connecting schools, volunteers, and healthcare partners.

Through 20/20 Mission, more than 8,000 pairs of eyeglasses have been collected and redistributed to underserved communities through partnerships with optometry clinics and service organizations in Canada and internationally. Kobe has developed efficient collection systems, quality control processes, and distribution networks to ensure donated eyewear reaches those who need it most. He has also established student-led clubs in secondary schools, fostering awareness of global vision inequity while empowering youth to lead donation drives, collaborate with local partners, and build leadership skills.

Kobe continues to cultivate a growing network of volunteers across BC and Canada. His work reflects a commitment to practical, sustainable, and equitable solutions that expand access to essential vision care while equipping young people to become leaders in social impact. In 2025, Kobe was recognized with the Terry Fox Humanitarian Award.

Shelley Magwood, Cache Creek

Shelley Magwood is one of the founding members of the Equality Project Society and served as its Executive Director and Financial Director until 2025. She initiated the project by bringing community members together to glean surplus food, prepare meals in their homes, and deliver them to individuals in need. What began as a grassroots effort has since grown into a registered charity supporting residents in Cache Creek, Ashcroft, and the surrounding area.

The Society provides access to nutritious food, essential supplies, and a safe, welcoming space for connection. Operating three to four days each week, it offers consistent, community-based support in a region with limited services. Shelley guided the development of programs to address food insecurity, homelessness, substance use, and social isolation. She also advanced service expansion, including the establishment of a warming centre during extreme winter conditions and the exploration of emergency shelter options.

Guided by a commitment to serve God and others and supported by her background as an Emergency Medical Assistant, Dispatcher, and in office management, Shelley brought practical expertise in health and safety to the organization. She secured funding, built strong community partnerships, and supported the Society's growth. Her work has strengthened local capacity and improved access to essential services for vulnerable populations.

Jacki McPherson, Penticton Indian Band

Jacki McPherson is a health professional and leader with more than 40 years of experience working with First Nations communities across British Columbia and at national levels. She currently serves as Health Director for the Penticton Indian Band and previously held similar roles with the Osoyoos Indian Band and Lower Similkameen Indian Band.

Throughout her career, she has led the development and delivery of community-based health and addictions programming for individuals of all ages. Her recent work includes establishing the Snxastwilxth Recovery House, a day treatment program, and advancing a comprehensive mental health and substance use strategy to address the opioid crisis within the Penticton Indian Band. She also contributed to the creation of the "Big Worries" mental health program for First Nations children and families.

Jacki has supported increased service capacity through partnerships with organizations including the First Nations Health Authority, Interior Health, and the Okanagan Nation Alliance. She has also contributed to initiatives such as the Integrated Community Outreach Team, connecting vulnerable individuals with care and supports. In addition to her community roles,

she contributes to provincial and national committees and supports training for health leaders through curriculum development and facilitation. She speaks with deep gratitude for the leadership and communities she has worked alongside, recognizing their guidance, trust, and shared commitment to improving health and well-being.

Rochelle Prasad, Surrey

Rochelle Prasad is an educator, nonprofit leader, and policy advisor working across education systems and youth engagement. She is the Founder of SPARK Foundation, a youth-led organization that has reached more than 500,000 young people globally, delivering leadership programs, scholarships, and workforce development initiatives, with strong roots across British Columbia.

Over more than a decade, she has secured funding to deliver free, youth-focused initiatives, including workshops, camps, and classroom resources for individuals aged 15 to 25. She has built and led teams of staff and volunteers while designing programs that center youth voice and create pathways for sustained engagement and leadership.

Her work includes advancing awareness of the history of indentured labourers and supporting Girit (Girmitiya) remembrance initiatives, particularly within Indo-Fijian communities in Surrey. She mentors students across K–12 and post-secondary settings and develops curriculum focused on civic engagement, social justice, and workforce readiness. Rochelle also contributes to policy discussions on education and youth engagement, advising governments and international organizations, including within the United Nations system, on inclusive approaches.

Her contributions have been recognized through numerous honours, including Forbes 30 Under 30 and RBC Top 100 Women Leaders in Canada.

Haley Regan, Syilxwa Spuʔus, Okanagan Nation

***Emerging Leader**

Haley Regan, Syilxwa Spuʔus (“Big Heart”), is an emerging Indigenous arts and community leader from the Penticton Indian Band in the Okanagan Nation. Her work connects cultural expression, youth engagement, and community programming. She trained through the National Indigenous Professional Artist Training Program at the En’owkin Centre, grounding her practice in Indigenous arts, knowledge, and cultural teachings.

Her leadership began early through volunteer service with the Penticton Indian Band youth group and Princess Margaret Secondary School’s Amnesty Global Awareness group. In 2022, she joined the Powwow planning committee for Powwow Between the Lakes and was soon entrusted with the role of Volunteer Coordinator, supporting large-scale event delivery, coordinating teams, and contributing to planning and fundraising.

Haley facilitates Indigenous fine art workshops for schools and community groups and has contributed to public art projects, including a youth-engaged mural through the BC Human Rights Commissioner's "From Hate to Hope" initiative. Haley continues to support youth through her role as Volunteer Coordinator for the *Gathering Our Voices*, Canada's largest Indigenous youth conference, where she leads hundreds of volunteers to help deliver a transformative experience for thousands of Indigenous youth.

Chief Willie Sellars, Williams Lake First Nation

Kukpi7 (Chief) Willie Sellars is a member of the Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) of the Secwepemc Nation and has served in elected leadership for more than 15 years. First elected to Council in 2008 at the age of 24, he became one of the youngest Councillors in the Nation's history. After a decade of service, he was elected Chief in 2018 and is now in his second term. Prior to his leadership roles, he worked as a Wildland Firefighter and later as a Special Project Coordinator in WLFN's Economic Development Department.

As Kukpi7, he has advanced initiatives that support economic development and self-determination, including implementing a land management system and negotiating agreements with industry partners. His approach emphasizes relationship-building and partnerships as pathways to reconciliation, helping to generate resources that support community programs and services.

He has also played a key role in the investigation of the former St. Joseph's Mission Residential School site, contributing to truth-seeking and healing for survivors and families. In addition to his leadership, he is an author of children's books and actively supports youth well-being through sport, culture, and community engagement.

Chyanne Trenholm, Campbell River

***Emerging Leader**

Chyanne Treholm, a member of the X^womałk^wu (Homalco) First Nation in Campbell River, has built her career in service of her community and territory. She began with Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours as a summer student, welcoming visitors and sharing the stories, lands, and traditions of her Nation. After earning a Bachelor of Tourism Management with a Minor in Recreation from Vancouver Island University, she returned full-time, advancing through marketing and operations roles before becoming General Manager.

An emerging Indigenous leader in tourism, Chyanne brings both lived experience and professional expertise to her work. She serves as the Vancouver Island Regional Director on the Indigenous Tourism BC Board and Commercial Bear Viewing BC Board, ensuring regional voices are reflected in provincial decision-making and connecting board strategy with community realities.

Her leadership is collaborative and values-driven, grounded in cultural integrity,

regenerative growth, and community well-being. She is committed to creating opportunities for Homalco members while strengthening connections to land, language, and culture. Chyanne also co-founded Nine Peaks Tree Care, a tree-service company, expanding Indigenous ownership into another sector. Across her work, she advances economic self-determination and demonstrates how tourism can support culture, protect lands, and build resilient futures.

Crystal White, Tumbler Ridge

Crystal (Crys) White is a long-time community volunteer whose contributions have supported cultural, environmental, and recreational initiatives in Tumbler Ridge since 2001. She has worked with numerous local organizations, including the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society, Tumbler Ridge Emergency Social Services, BC Parks, the Grizzly Valley Saddle Club, and the Tumbler Ridge Community Garden, taking on both leadership and hands-on support roles that strengthen community life.

Among her most significant ongoing contributions is her role as volunteer Archivist for the Tumbler Ridge Museum. Over the past decade, Crys has obtained the necessary qualifications and developed the archives from the ground up, working alongside local historians to preserve the region's heritage. She contributes to research and publications on the early history of Tumbler Ridge and has supported palaeontological initiatives, including dinosaur track site excavations.

Crys also promotes community well-being through teaching seniors' fitness classes and organizing local concerts as a piano teacher. She has further contributed through volunteer coordination for events such as the Emperor's Challenge. Her sustained involvement reflects a deep commitment to preserving local history, strengthening community programs, and supporting residents across Tumbler Ridge.

Dan & Sandi Wiebe, Nakusp

For more than 25 years, Dan and Sandi Wiebe have guided Box Lake Lumber, a family-founded operation established in 1985. Following two devastating mill fires in the 1990s, Dan assumed a primary operational role in 1998 and, together with Sandi, rebuilt the business with a focus on Western Red Cedar split rail fencing and value-added production, utilizing low-grade and previously unused timber. As part of this innovation, Dan designed and built a bale machine that compresses mulch byproduct into compact 4x4-foot cubes, improving efficiency in transportation, storage, and retail distribution.

Their shared leadership has strengthened both the business and its contribution to the economic and social fabric of Nakusp. Under their direction, the family-run business has become a stable employer, supporting more than 25 local jobs, along with contractors and related economic activity across the region. In the wake of major industry closures, Box Lake Lumber has played an important role in sustaining employment and helping stabilize the local economy.

Dan and Sandi continue to navigate shifting forestry policies, fibre shortages, and market pressures by adopting innovative approaches, including the use of wildfire-affected timber and low-waste production practices. They are also active contributors to community life, supporting organizations, events, and families. Their work reflects a long-standing commitment to local employment, community resilience, and responsible stewardship.