

Telling the stories of remarkable women in the Thompson Valley

# I AM WOMAN

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2026

THE WOMEN  
POWERING OUR  
COMMUNITY



15  
WOMEN

DRIVING IMPACT IN  
LOCAL BUSINESS  
AND EVERYDAY LIFE

JACKIE  
VAN VLIET

MORE THAN JUST INVESTMENTS

# Editor's Letter

There is something powerful about being first. This edition marks the very first *I AM WOMAN* in Kamloops, a milestone that feels both long overdue and deeply intentional. The Thompson Valley is filled with women quietly and boldly shaping our community every single day. This publication exists to bring their stories into the light.

As you turn these pages, you will meet women redefining what leadership looks like. Women who are creating space for healing, breaking barriers in industry, building businesses with heart, and stepping into roles where no woman has stood before. From mill floors to medical offices, from trades to trauma-informed wellness, their paths are different, but their impact is shared.

A theme became clear as we brought this first Kamloops edition to life. Strength does not always look loud. Sometimes it looks like choosing yourself. Sometimes it looks like staying. Sometimes it looks like starting over. And often, it looks like lifting other women as you rise.

This publication is not just about professional accomplishments. It is about identity, courage, resilience, and the quiet moments that shape a life. It is about women who are not waiting for permission. Women who are rewriting narratives. Women who are building something better for their families, their teams, and their community.

To every woman featured in these pages, thank you for trusting us with your story.

And to the women reading this, may you see yourself here.

Welcome to the first *I AM WOMAN Kamloops*.



## CONTRIBUTORS



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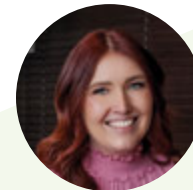
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THE WOMEN POWERING  
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**TC Virtual Solutions** is a Canada-based virtual assistant company made up of a dedicated team of experienced medical office assistants who work remotely with healthcare practitioners and clinic owners. We provide reliable, behind-the-scenes support that helps clinics run smoothly, efficiently, and professionally.

Our core services include direct billing support, administrative assistance, and social media management, all designed to reduce workload, improve systems, and give business owners back their time while supporting sustainable growth.

At its heart, TC Virtual Solutions was built to support women-led and growing practices by creating strong, dependable systems that ease day-to-day pressures, prevent burnout, and allow women in healthcare to lead with confidence, clarity, and balance. This support gives practitioners the space to focus on patient care and the work they do best, without sacrificing their well-being or long-term vision.

*Théa Csere*

Founder | Director

**TC Virtual Solutions Co.**

Virtual Admin. Power for the Health & Wellness Industries



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# A FRAGRANCE OF FAITH. RESILIENCE. PURPOSE.

*By Joana Marie Tiomico, Founder & Perfumer of Zed Eau de Parfum*

Zed Eau de Parfum is more than fragrance. It is faith bottled with resilience, artistry infused with purpose, and womanhood expressed without apology.

Zed was born from my love of scent and my personal journey one marked by resilience, faith, and quiet strength. Each fragrance represents empowerment, identity, and confidence, especially for women who have endured deeply and risen boldly. The name Zed, a Greek word meaning "Jesus is Just," reflects the faith that continues to guide me.

Kamloops, British Columbia, became Zed's first home a community that believed in my vision and supported its growth. Those relationships reminded me that no journey is taken alone.

Zed Eau de Parfum is more than fragrance. It is faith bottled with resilience, artistry infused with purpose, and womanhood expressed without apology.

**Discover the story behind the scent.**

@zed\_edp\_bc

**Marie Joe**  
Zoewannas Oil-Based Perfumes



# Invictus Properties Inc.

## LEADING WITH HEART: THE WOMEN HELPING SHAPE THE CULTURE AT INVICTUS PROPERTIES' DELTA HOTELS BY MARRIOTT KAMLOOPS

At the Delta Hotels by Marriott Kamloops, hospitality is more than a service; it's a culture shaped by people who care deeply about one another, their guests, and the work they do.

Operating under Invictus Properties, the hotel is guided by a clear mission: to create a memorable experience for both guests and employees. Its vision is equally intentional, to be the leading hotel and meeting place in Kamloops, combining a landmark location with innovative, industry-leading service, while offering business-class excellence with the warmth of home.

For Madison Krulick, Assistant Food & Beverage Manager, the culture at Invictus Properties' Delta Kamloops is rooted in passion, one of the organization's core values.

"It's a passionate environment," she says. "You can feel it in the people."

That passion is evident not only in the guest experience but in how teams show up for one another behind the scenes. Employees are encouraged to bring positive energy into their roles, energy that is seen, heard, and felt throughout the property.

Srisha Paul, Assistant Banquet Manager, describes a workplace where people feel genuinely valued.

"You're not just a number here," she says. "You feel wanted."

That sense of belonging is no accident. Authenticity, another Invictus core value, is woven into daily interactions, creating a culture grounded in integrity, respect, and trust.

Hospitality is inherently relationship-driven, and at Delta Kamloops, collaboration is essential to success.

Dakota Parry, now a Group Sales Manager, began her journey with the hotel in 2014 at the front desk, when the property was still independently operated. Over time, she gained experience across departments, knowledge that continues to shape her leadership today.

"Everything works better when departments collaborate," she says. "Success here depends on relationships."

Srisha echoes that sentiment, highlighting how cross-training is part of the culture. During busy periods, team members step outside their usual roles, whether from housekeeping, sales, or operations, to support one another.



That teamwork strengthens skills, builds empathy, and reinforces the idea that everyone contributes to the guest experience.

Each of these women challenges the outdated notion that hospitality is temporary work rather than a viable, long-term career.

Madison began as a part-time server in 2018. Today, she holds a senior leadership role in food and beverage, a path made possible by leaders who encourage growth when employees express the desire to advance.

"IF YOU'RE WILLING TO WORK HARD AND SPEAK UP ABOUT YOUR GOALS, THERE'S A PATH HERE," SHE SAYS.

That commitment to development is reflected across Invictus Properties. Staff longevity is celebrated, with many employees staying for decades. Leadership stability reinforces that culture, including Director of Revenue & Marketing Darcia Ball, who has spent more than 15 years with the organization, mentoring teams and helping shape the company's people-first approach.

Rather than rushing to fill positions, the Delta Kamloops team prioritizes cultural fit, even if it takes longer.

Madison notes that many employees arrive planning to stay only briefly, only to find themselves deeply connected to the environment.

What stands out most is how strongly these leaders uplift one another.

Each credits female mentors within the organization for encouraging confidence and growth. Madison recalls advice that shaped her leadership: be loud and be proud. Srisha encourages women to trust their instincts and not shrink themselves to fit the room. Dakota reflects on learning to speak up and realizing that her experience across departments was not only valid, but valuable.

Their stories reflect the journey of many women in their 30s, balancing personal milestones with professional growth, supported by mentorship, trust, and teamwork.

Invictus Properties' core values, passionate, authentic, and collaborative, are not aspirational statements. They are lived daily by leaders like Madison, Srisha, and Dakota.

Together, they are shaping a workplace where people stay, grow, and lead with heart.

And in doing so, they are proving that when hospitality is done right, it becomes more than an industry; it becomes a community built on connection, opportunity, and purpose.



# Alysia Waters

Uwila Wellness

## CREATING SPACE FOR THE BODY TO HEAL



At Uwila Wellness, healing is understood not as something to achieve, but something to remember.

The work is grounded in a simple yet powerful belief: the body already knows how to heal when it is given the right conditions, support, and time. In a world that moves quickly and often demands productivity over presence, this work offers a pause. A place to slow down, reconnect, and gently release what the body has been holding, sometimes long before the mind can make sense of it.

Rooted in trauma-informed bodywork, the practice centres on regulation rather than just repair. Sessions are quiet and restorative, designed to help the body shift out of survival mode and into a state where healing can unfold naturally, without force or urgency.

Founder and practitioner Alysia Waters came to this work after decades in the corporate world, followed by a deeply personal healing journey that required her to listen to her body in an entirely new way. Rather than changing paths overnight, she followed intuitive steps into study and hands-on practice, allowing her work to evolve gradually and organically.

For Alysia, healing is a return. A remembering. A steady journey back to the truth of who we are beneath stress, conditioning, and long-held survival patterns.

Her background is layered and expansive, shaped by years of training across energy work, somatic education, holistic pelvic care, yoga, breathwork, and ceremonial practice. Guided by intuition and grounded in trauma-informed bodywork, her sessions honour not only the physical body, but also the emotional and ancestral stories it carries.

“THE BODY IS THE BIGGEST TRUTH TELLER,” ALYSIA EXPLAINS. “IT ALREADY KNOWS WHAT IT NEEDS. WE JUST HAVE TO CREATE THE SPACE TO LISTEN.”

That sense of safety is created through intentional presence. Sessions are held with clear boundaries and grounded energy, allowing clients to settle into the experience and leave feeling lighter and more at ease in their bodies.

The work meets people where they are. For those new to body-based healing or unsure about talk therapy, gentle approaches such as Reiki and craniosacral sessions offer an accessible place to begin, supporting nervous system regulation with minimal effort required.

Women’s health is not just part of the practice, it is one of Alysia’s deepest passions. Her focus is shaped by lived experience, beginning



with an endometriosis diagnosis in her early twenties and later adenomyosis. Years spent navigating a medical system that often emphasized symptom management over deeper support left her feeling unheard and disconnected from her body.

That experience became the foundation for a central focus on reproductive and pelvic wellness. Drawing from both professional training and lived experience, Alysia studied the Womb Continuum, an approach that uses intentional bodywork to support alignment, circulation, and the release of stored tension within the reproductive system. This work speaks to areas of the body that are often met with silence or shame, and for which many women receive limited support.

“There is so much emphasis on managing symptoms,” Alysia says. “But very little support for helping women reconnect with their bodies and feel safe within them again.”

Another cornerstone of the practice is visceral meridian therapy, often referred to as the deep reset. Working with the body’s twelve major organs and corresponding meridian lines, this approach supports the release of deeply held physical and emotional patterns.

Clients often describe leaving these sessions feeling profoundly rested, as though their system has finally been given permission to slow down.

Grief and loss healing sessions are also offered, created in response to how little space modern life allows for processing major loss. While talk therapy can be valuable for understanding grief, this work focuses on supporting the body in releasing what has been held beneath the surface, offering a quiet and supported container for integration.

With a dedicated space now open, the work has expanded into immersive workshops that blend education, embodiment, and nervous system support. These longer-format experiences invite participants to explore healing in community, complementing the one-on-one sessions offered throughout the year.

At its core, this work is not about fixing what is broken. It is about slowing down, listening closely, and allowing the body to guide the process.

Sometimes, that is where real change begins.

# Kaci-Ann Phillips

## STRENGTH IS NOT SILENCE: HOW KACI-ANN PHILLIPS IS HELPING WOMEN RECLAIM THEIR WORTH

For generations, women have been taught that strength looks like endurance. Like juggling every role without complaint. Like pushing through exhaustion, self-doubt, and emotional weight while quietly putting themselves last.

For Kaci-Ann Phillips, that definition of strength is long overdue for a rewrite.

A Canadian Certified Counsellor based in Kamloops, Kaci-Ann believes one of the most damaging narratives women carry is the idea that struggling means they are failing, that needing support somehow signals they are “not enough.”

“In my work, I see it all the time,” she says. “Women come in believing there’s something wrong with them because they feel overwhelmed. But most of the time, they’re already doing too much.”

Society asks women to be everything at once - caregivers, partners, professionals, friends, while rarely giving them permission to pause, reflect, or tend to their own needs. Over time, that pressure often shows up as burnout, anxiety, resentment, and a deep disconnection from self.



Counselling, Kaci-Ann explains, offers something many women have never truly experienced: a space where they do not have to perform, prove, or please.

“It’s a space to be authentically yourself without guilt or judgment,” she says. “Strength doesn’t come from pushing harder. It comes from unlearning the expectations that were never sustainable to begin with.”

Kaci-Ann’s path to becoming a counsellor was shaped by her own journey of self-doubt and healing. Though she always felt drawn to the profession, she spent years questioning whether she was capable enough to pursue it. She explored multiple career paths, from English studies to respiratory therapy, all before finally returning to psychology.

What ultimately guided her forward was her own experience as a client.

For 15 years, Kaci-Ann worked with the same counsellor, someone who created a space where she felt deeply seen and supported, without bias or expectation. That relationship became transformative.

“I know what it feels like to sit in that chair and be heard,” she says. “I wanted to be that person for others, not to fix them, but to walk beside them.”

Today, Kaci-Ann’s work focuses largely on relationships and relationship-based trauma, helping individuals understand how past experiences shape the way they show up in the world. Many of the women she supports struggle with people-pleasing patterns, unclear boundaries, and a tendency to abandon their own needs in order to feel valued or safe.

“When women feel disconnected from themselves, they start questioning their worth in relationships,” she explains. “That leads to burnout, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion.”



A key part of her work is helping clients find their voice, learning to set boundaries, advocate for themselves, and respond thoughtfully rather than reacting from survival mode.

For Kaci-Ann, healing is not about fixing what’s broken. It’s about safety.

“When we feel safe with ourselves and with others, we slow down,” she says.

“WE FEEL OUR EMOTIONS.  
WE RESPOND DIFFERENTLY.  
AND THAT’S WHERE REAL  
CHANGE HAPPENS.”

Holding space for others’ stories requires intentional care of her own well-being. Through boundaries, grounding practices like yoga, and moments of quiet decompression, Kaci-Ann ensures she can show up fully without carrying what isn’t hers to hold.

One of the most rewarding parts of her work, she says, is watching clients reach a point where they no longer need regular sessions, where they feel strong enough to navigate life on their own, knowing support is always available if they need it again.

Looking ahead, Kaci-Ann hopes to expand her practice, bringing in additional therapists and offering more accessible workshops and options to better serve the community.

Because for her, counselling isn’t about weakness.

It’s about choosing yourself. About learning that you are already enough, not because you’ve done more, but because you’ve finally stopped abandoning yourself.

And that, she believes, is one of the strongest things a woman can do.



To explore working with Kaci-Ann Phillips, sessions can be booked online.



# Top Down Enterprises

## REPRESENTATION MATTERS: WHY WOMEN NEED TO SEE WOMEN IN THE TRADES

For generations, women were told, sometimes subtly, sometimes bluntly, that the trades were not built for them. Too physical. Too tough. Too male. But the reality is shifting, workplaces like Top Down Enterprises Inc. in Kamloops are proving that women not only belong in trades, they are shaping what the future of industry looks like.

Top Down Enterprises is a small but growing company, and women currently make up 60% of the team. Their backgrounds couldn't be more different: a heavy-duty apprentice mechanic, a Certified Hairstylist, and an owner whose career has spanned healthcare, finance, conservation, education, and technical trades. Together, they demonstrate a powerful truth – there is no single path into the trades, and no single type of woman who succeeds here.

None of them grew up imagining life in heavy equipment. That is the first lesson for any woman reading this. You do not need to have it all figured out early. You just need the courage to say yes when something sparks your interest. The trades are not defined by brute strength. They are defined by problem-solving, diagnostics, adaptability, and showing up with integrity every day, ready to learn. As Becca, a 4th Year Heavy-Duty Apprentice Mechanic, often says, success in this industry has far more to do with work ethic and mindset than physical capability. Modern tools, ergonomic equipment, and evolving workplace cultures have changed what the trades look like, and women are thriving because of it.

But thriving doesn't mean challenges disappear.

In male-dominated environments, women's directness is sometimes misinterpreted as aggression, and self-advocacy can be unfairly labelled as emotional. Roseanna, co-owner of Top Down Enterprises, has experienced this firsthand. Yet she refuses to shrink herself to make others comfortable. Instead, she leads with clarity, respect, and confidence, setting the tone for the kind of workplace she believes in.

That workplace is intentional. Flexibility is not seen as weakness. Parents are supported. Children are welcome in the office when life happens. People are treated like humans first and employees second. It is a culture built on trust, humour, and mutual respects, proof that professionalism and compassion can coexist.

This is where mentorship becomes everything.

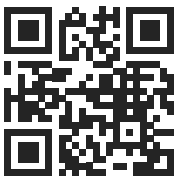
Women entering the trades do not just need job opportunities, they need representation. They need to see women leading, learning, troubleshooting, and succeeding. They need to see that ambition, family, confidence, and self-worth can co-exist in this industry. Whether it's Becca's involvement with Women in Trades initiatives or Roseanna's open-door approach to conversation and guidance, the message is clear: women lift as they climb.

Their advice to women considering the trades is simple and honest. Be confident. Ask questions. Protect your health, mental and physical. Do not stay in environments that diminish you just to put in time. And most importantly, know your value.

The trades offer stable, fulfilling, well-paying careers without requiring decades of schooling or overwhelming debt. They offer tangible results, constant learning, and the satisfaction of building something real. And today, women are not just welcome – they are needed.

If you are a woman feeling stuck, curious, or ready for a change, let this be your sign. You belong in rooms where your skills matter. You belong in industries that value your perspective. You belong in the trades.

AND THERE ARE WOMEN –  
LIKE THOSE AT TOP DOWN  
ENTERPRISES READY TO  
REMIND YOU THAT YOU DO  
NOT HAVE TO DO IT ALONE.





# Dr. Christelle Oliver-Dussault

## WHERE MEDICINE MEETS MEANING: DR. CHRISTELLE OLIVER-DUSSAULT ON BEAUTY, BURNOUT, AND FINDING YOUR WAY BACK

**D**r. Christelle Oliver-Dussault has lived many professional lives — physician, educator, aesthetic practitioner, podcast host- but at the heart of everything she does is a single throughline: helping people feel more at home in themselves.

Trained as a family physician, Christelle completed her medical education in Ireland before practicing abroad and later returning to Canada. Her path has been anything but linear. After years of building a traditional family practice in Ireland, she moved to Vancouver in 2019 with a newborn, navigating immigration, licensing, and the quiet pressure many women carry to “do it all” without slowing down. When the pandemic hit shortly after, the pace only intensified.

“I was giving everything to my patients,” she reflects. “And very little to myself.”

That realization became a turning point.

Today, Christelle wears many hats, but everything she does is rooted in connection and compassion. She practices medical aesthetics with SONA MD in Kamloops, where she describes her work as the place “where art and medicine meet.” Rather than chasing trends or transformations, her focus is on subtle, personalized treatments that honour the individual in front of her.

So often, the women who come through her door are standing at a crossroads, after motherhood, caregiving, loss, or a major life change. They aren’t asking to look like someone else. They’re asking to look like themselves again.

“AGING IS A JOURNEY,” SHE SAYS. “AND IT DESERVES TO BE APPROACHED WITH KINDNESS, NOT FEAR.”

But Christelle’s influence extends well beyond the treatment room.

Alongside her clinical work, she teaches women’s health to family medicine residents, contributes to urgent primary care, and moderates group-based psychoeducation programs for anxiety and depression. It’s a balance she’s built carefully, one that allows space for connection without burning out her capacity for care.

Burnout, after all, is something she knows intimately.

After the birth of her second child, Christelle began experiencing physical symptoms she couldn’t ignore, hives, chest pain, and persistent palpitations. Despite her medical training, it took time to recognize what her body was telling her.

“I didn’t realize how disconnected I was from myself until my body forced me to listen.”

That season of burnout and the healing that followed became the foundation for one of her most personal projects: Reclaim the Pink Within.

Inspired by the phenomenon of flamingos losing their pink while nurturing their young, the project explores matrescence, the profound neurological, hormonal, and identity shifts that occur during motherhood. Through conversations, community events, and now a podcast, Christelle is creating space for women to talk openly about the invisible workload of caregiving, ambition, and identity loss.



“These are conversations women are already having, just quietly, in the shadows,” she says. “I wanted to bring them into the light.”

She also co-hosts The Beauty Equation, a podcast dedicated to honest, stigma-free conversations about the aesthetics industry. In a digital world crowded with influencer advice and quick fixes, Christelle believes medical professionals have a responsibility to share accurate, thoughtful information, even when the science is still evolving.

“If someone tells you one thing will fix everything,” she says, “that’s usually a red flag.”

What ties all of Christelle’s work together is not perfection, productivity, or performance, but presence.

She values variety, boundaries, and protected time with her children. She has returned to dance, reconnecting with a part of herself she once set aside. And she continues to build a life where curiosity, compassion, and connection lead the way.

For Christelle, success is no longer about doing more.

It’s about doing what matters and helping others remember who they are along the way.



Reclaim the Pink Within



Beauty Equation

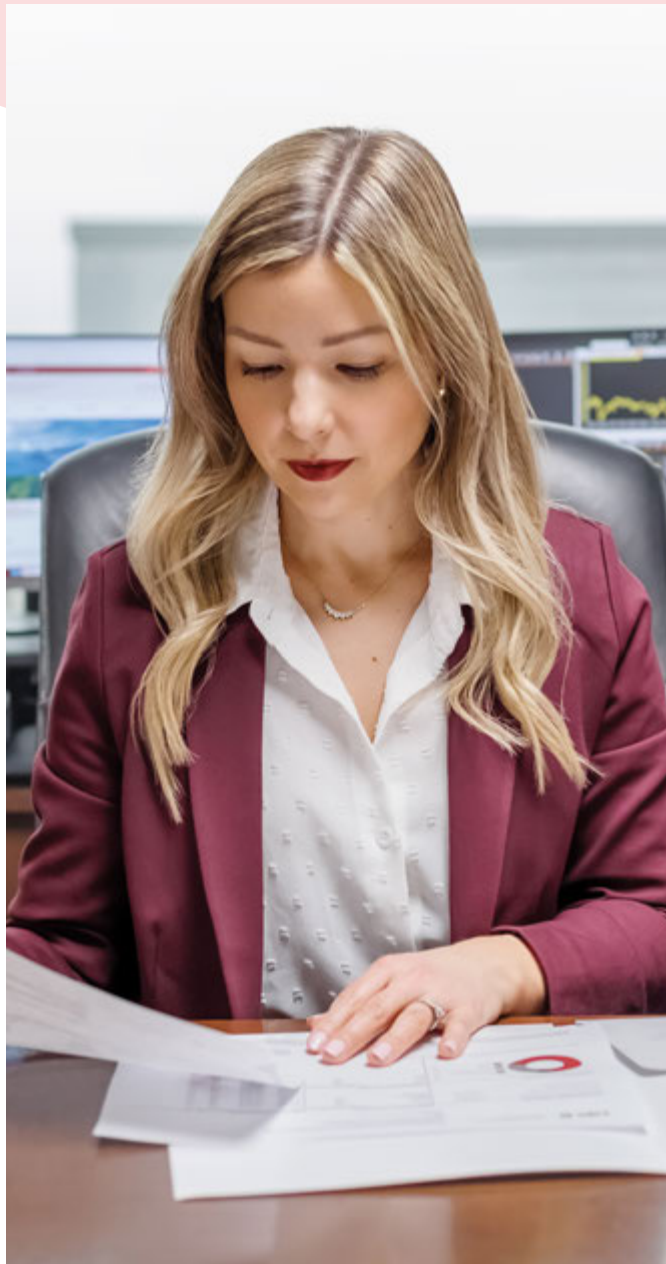


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# Jackie Van Vliet

CIBC Private Wealth

## MORE THAN JUST INVESTMENTS



For Jackie Van Vliet, true success is in helping women feel confident, capable, and in control of their financial future. As an Investment Advisor, Jackie believes strong returns and disciplined investment management are essential, but never the starting point. True wealth management begins with understanding the person behind the portfolio. It starts with listening.

"The best part of my job is getting to know my clients, discovering what truly matters to them, and helping them live a life they love," she says. "Everything flows from understanding the purpose behind their money."

Working closely with individuals, couples, and families, Jackie takes a personalized approach to wealth planning. She believes money should support clarity and peace of mind. Her process focuses on identifying priorities and long-term objectives, then building practical strategies that align with them.

"Peace of mind is powerful," she says. "When you know your finances are aligned with your goals, it frees you to focus on what matters most."

As a person's wealth grows, so too does their financial complexity. Jackie's clients often seek guidance on transforming years of accumulation into sustainable retirement income, and thoughtful legacy planning. She helps simplify the path forward, creating strategies that integrate growth, risk management, tax efficiency and long-term stability.

"I STRIVE TO CREATE A SAFE, NON-JUDGMENTAL SPACE WHERE CLIENTS FEEL COMFORTABLE ASKING QUESTIONS AND ARE A PART OF THE PROCESS" JACKIE EXPLAINS. "WHEN PEOPLE FEEL INFORMED AND SUPPORTED, THEY MAKE BETTER DECISIONS."

This approach is especially meaningful for women navigating major life transitions including retirement, divorce, or the loss of a spouse. Jackie has become a trusted guide in these moments, offering education and steady support without pressure or complicated language.



"I WANT WOMEN TO KNOW THEY ARE NOT ALONE AND THAT THEY ARE ABSOLUTELY CAPABLE," SHE SAYS.

CIBC Private Wealth consists of services provided by CIBC and certain of its subsidiaries, including CIBC Wood Gundy, a division of CIBC World Markets Inc. Jackie Van Vliet is an Investment Advisor with CIBC Wood Gundy in Kamloops. The views of Jackie Van Vliet do not necessarily reflect those of CIBC World Markets Inc. If you are currently a CIBC Wood Gundy client, please contact your Investment Advisor.



Beyond one-on-one advising, Jackie creates opportunities for women to learn and connect through educational events and workshops. These gatherings bring together professionals across disciplines to share insight, perspective, and reassurance during periods of transition.

Her commitment to inclusive financial education is deeply personal. Growing up, Jackie observed how financial conversations often centred on men, even when women were equally invested in the outcomes. That early awareness shaped her belief that everyone deserves to feel informed, respected, and involved in decisions that affect their future.

Whether working with couples or individuals, Jackie ensures all voices are heard and understood, recognizing that while financial goals may differ, the need for clarity is universal.

Her work also challenges long-standing assumptions within the financial industry. Wealth management remains a male-dominated space. Jackie is proud to represent a growing shift, one where empathy, communication, and long-term thinking are valued as strengths.

Research consistently shows that women tend to be patient, long-term investors. Jackie sees this reflected daily in her practice. "When women understand the 'why' behind their plan, they stay focused on the bigger picture," she says.

In an industry that at times treats money as transactional, Jackie offers something deeper. She believes women deserve to feel confident and secure in her financial future, and it all begins with a conversation.



# Irene Preto

Kruger Kamloops Pulp

## MAKING HISTORY AT KRUGER KAMLOOPS PULP

When Irene Preto stepped into the role of General Manager at Kruger Kamloops Pulp, she did not just take on leadership of one of the city's most significant industrial operations. She made history.

In the mill's 60-year existence, Irene is the first woman to ever hold the position of General Manager. She is also the first female General Manager in the 122-year history of Kruger, a Canadian, fourth-generation, family-owned company founded in 1904.

In an industry long shaped by men, the moment represents a powerful shift. While Irene carries the milestone with quiet confidence, she understands its importance not just for herself, but for the women watching.

"I do want to be a face that helps break down barriers," she says. "I think I've brought a different perspective and soft skills into leadership that our industry hasn't historically had."

Kruger Kamloops Pulp is more than an industrial site. It is one of Kamloops' most important economic drivers, generating about \$1 billion in annual economic activity within the local region. For six decades, the mill has been deeply woven into the fabric of the community and, under Irene's leadership, it is entering a new era.

A professional chemical engineer by training, Irene's path began far from the mill floor. She started her career in bio-energy research with Natural Resources Canada, working alongside CANMET Energy Labs and the Canadian Forest Service. As a founding member of the federal Investment in Forest Industry Transformation (IFIT) program, she helped shape a national initiative designed to push Canada's forest sector toward innovation and sustainability.

"I went into chemical engineering because I wanted to have a positive impact on our environment," Irene says. "As you learn more about the Kraft pulping process, you realize it's this giant recycling factory. It is a perfect example of a circular economy where the residual wood chips and bark from a sawmill are turned into pulp and power."

That realization led her to leave government and move into industry. Irene spent twelve years at Mercer Celgar Pulp, working her way through operations and leadership roles before being recruited to Kruger Kamloops Pulp. After a short overlap with the outgoing General Manager, she stepped fully into the role just over a year ago.

Despite the scale of the operation, Irene's leadership style remains deeply people-focused.

"I'm an engineer," she says. "But it turned out that I like people better than equipment. Manufacturing pulp relies on teamwork, and we have a strong team here. It truly is our people who drive the mill's success."

At Kruger Kamloops Pulp, women are represented across departments, including operations, maintenance, safety, environment, human resources, and technical roles. The mill actively supports women in trades through Thompson Rivers University, and its HR Manager, Stephanie Blier, was recently named one of Pulp & Paper Canada's Top 10 Under 40.

Innovation and sustainability are central to the mill's future. Kruger Kamloops Pulp produces enough green energy to power its own operations and nearly half of Kamloops. In 2024, the mill utilized more than 30% of British Columbia's harvested fire-damaged wood fibre, preventing associated greenhouse gas emissions while easing harvesting pressure on healthy forests.

The mill currently produces four types of pulp used for Kruger Products' Scotties and Purex brand tissues, as well as cement board, electrical transformers, and more. The mill is now undergoing a major transformation through its Next Generation Specialty Pulp Project, a \$35 million investment set to come online in early 2027. The project will modernize operations and expand the mill's specialty pulp capabilities.

In a full-circle moment, the IFIT program Irene helped create earlier in her career is now helping fund this project.

"These were the kinds of projects I was dreaming about when I was a young engineer wondering what came next," she says.

Kruger's impact extends beyond production. The mill has supported United Way campaigns for more than 60 years and works closely with Indigenous partners through initiatives such as River City Fibre, creating sustainable economic opportunities rooted in respect and collaboration.

For Irene, choosing Kruger was a values-driven decision.

"I wanted to work for a Canadian, fourth-generation, family-owned company," she says.

"BEING ALIGNED WITH THE VALUES OF WHERE YOU WORK REALLY MATTERS."

By breaking new ground as the first woman at the helm of Kruger Kamloops Pulp, and the first in the company's century-long history, Irene Preto is helping redefine leadership in one of Canada's most essential industries.

In doing so, she is opening the door for the women who will follow.





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**Jessie Sorensen\***  
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# SAGE & PLATE

Creating Memories with Every Bite

Your Destination for Exquisite Catering, Meal Prep, Private In-House Dining, and Much More.



**Chef Paige Badminton** has spent 15 years mastering her craft, and in 2021 she launched Sage & Plate to bring elevated, restaurant-quality dining directly into people's homes. Since then, she has become a recognized leader in Kamloops' culinary scene, earning multiple gold awards in catering, meal prep, and more.

Rooted in sustainable, seasonal, and from-scratch cooking, Sage & Plate reflects Paige's commitment to authenticity and community. She partners with local farmers and purveyors to showcase the region's best ingredients, ensuring every menu feels thoughtful, intentional, and deeply connected to place.

As a woman-owned business, Sage & Plate stands as a pillar of creativity and hospitality. From intimate dinners to milestone celebrations, Paige is reshaping the Kamloops dining experience, one beautifully curated event at a time.



**Ready to elevate your next gathering?**

Book with Sage & Plate and let Chef Paige craft something unforgettable.



# LOOKING FOR A TATTOO THAT'S MORE THAN JUST INK?

At Juggerbean Tattoo Parlour, every design tells a story. Founded by Indigenous artist and entrepreneur Amie Easton, Juggerbean is the first-ever tattoo studio at Sun Peaks Ski Resort and home to one-of-a-kind artistry.

Amie is known for her detailed tattoos, satirical portraits, and the way she blends humour, heritage, and creativity into every piece. Whether it's your first tattoo or your next masterpiece, you'll leave with art that feels truly yours.

But Juggerbean is more than a parlour, it's a hub for tattoo culture. From building Inkcompatible magazine to launching the Kamloops Tattoo Show, Amie is creating spaces where artists and clients come together to celebrate creativity, safety, and professionalism.



Now it's your turn to experience it. Step into a studio where passion meets precision, and leave with a tattoo you'll be proud to wear for life.

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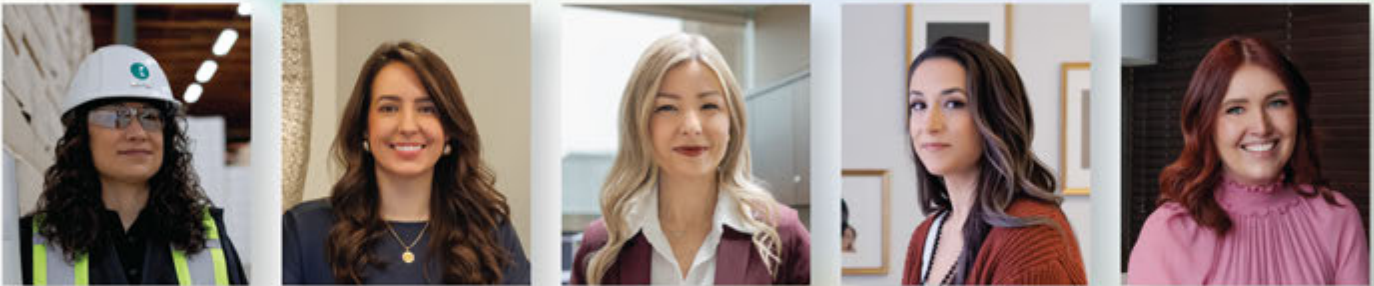


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