

Recognizing female leadership in the Okanagan

# I AM WOMAN

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2024

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Tina is also very involved in her Community and was recently awarded the Excellence in Business Ethics award with the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce, which she takes great pride in. She is also a director on the Greater Westside Board of Trade, and even most recently elected President of the Westside Daze planning committee. She loves to assist organizations with any signage needs.

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## Editor's Letter

As women, it's all too common for us to be afraid to take up space. Don't rock the boat, we tell ourselves. We can't be criticized, hurt or disappointed if we can't be seen.

The women in this year's edition of I Am Woman have all made the decision to step into the spotlight. To claim their space onstage unashamedly and with the ultimate goal of inspiring others to do the same. This kind of visibility, after all, is not optional when you want to own a business, be a leader or make a meaningful impact on your community.

When these women put themselves out there, it was not without risk. They failed, stumbled, got hurt and overcame adversity as they went. Some days, they wondered if it would have been easier to keep quiet and hide.

But what you will never hear from these women is regret. Leadership isn't always easy, but it is always worth it. Resilient, fearless and compassionate leaders like the women in the pages of this magazine spend their lives forging better paths for themselves, their families and their communities.

Their accomplishments may be extraordinary, but at the end of the day, these women's stories are stories most women are all too familiar with.

Struggling with inequity in the workplace.

Returning from maternity leave to discover things have changed at a job you loved.

Recovering from trauma and finding a strong voice you never knew you had dying to speak a truth you've never told.

Discovering you can take up space. That you should. And that the world needs to hear what you have to say.

As you read the stories in this year's publication, take a moment to think about whether or not you're taking up enough space. Can you make yourself bigger? Can you be a little louder? Can you be a little less afraid of what others think in the service of changing what others think?

You deserve to be seen and heard. You matter.

Happy boat rocking.

**Lauren Frost**

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MAKE WAVES,  
ROCK THE BOAT.

# Suzanne Degner

Love It Dental

## A PROMISE KEPT: LOVE IT DENTAL REIMAGINES DENTISTRY

Suzanne Degner reflects on her first year and half running a dental clinic founded on love and compassion.



“I THINK IT’S IMPORTANT AS WOMEN IN BUSINESS NOT TO SUGAR COAT IT—OWNING A BUSINESS IS CRAZY HARD WORK!”

Love It Dental has been open for about a year and a half, and owner and dentist Suzanne Degner can confidently say her vision has come to life.

“When I opened Love It Dental in September 2022, I wanted to create an environment that was unlike any other dental clinic,” says Suzanne. “I didn’t want people to feel like their appointment was a chore—I wanted them to love it!”

As patients eagerly return for follow ups, positive reviews pour in and the practice continues to grow, Suzanne is filled with gratitude and love for the community that makes it all possible. “It is such a highlight for me to have new patients referring their family and friends to me,” she says. “It lets me know that I am doing exactly what I set out to do.”

Having a background in nursing, Suzanne was always passionate about integrating a higher level of care into her practice as a dentist. When she was working as a dental associate in her hometown of Edmonton,

she would often dream about how she would run her own clinic one day.

Moving with her four wonderful children to Kelowna was a big decision, but now that Suzanne has had time to settle in, she has no regrets. “I believe that when you surround yourself with great people who want you to succeed, you are able to accomplish so much more,” she says. “My family and the community here have all been so supportive.”

As a first time business owner, Suzanne’s journey with Love It Dental has not been free from challenges. Like anything worth doing, she says, entrepreneurship can be tough.

“I think it’s important as women in business not to sugar coat it—owning a business is crazy hard work!” she says. “There’s always going to be a lesson you have to learn, a conversation that’s difficult to have, and a day off you’re not able to take. But if you truly love what you do, it will always be worth it.”

If you live in the Okanagan, Suzanne might look familiar. Since opening Love It Dental, she’s been in several publications and is constantly out mingling or speaking at local events. While she seems like a natural, Suzanne will tell you that she had to work hard at being comfortable in the spotlight.

“Although it didn’t come easily at first, I knew that by getting myself out there, I was really getting all women out there,” says Suzanne. “We need to be seen and recognized so that other women and girls know they can be and do anything.”

If you’re dreading your next dentist appointment, Suzanne wants you to know that it doesn’t have to be that way. “Many people who are seeking us out have not been to a dentist in several years and have stayed away out of fear, anxiety and negative past experiences,” she explains. “It is deeply rewarding to earn the trust of these people and transform them into a new way of doing dentistry where there is compassion, understanding, care and love.”

# Renee Merrifield

Troika Developments, MLA Kelowna-Mission

## FOLLOW OPPORTUNITY AND TAKE YOUR PASSION WITH YOU

From business to politics to motherhood, Renee Merrifield centres her life and career around serving her community.



"FOLLOW OPPORTUNITY AND TAKE YOUR PASSION WITH YOU"

Ascribing to the philosophy: "follow opportunity and take your passion with you," Renee Merrifield has never shied away from pursuing new opportunities and passions as they arose.

Founding partner and co-CEO of Troika Developments as well as the elected MLA for Kelowna-Mission, Renee's initial interests were neither in construction nor politics.

"You could not have predicted my career path," Renee laughs. "I started university in biomedical sciences, and graduated with a Bachelor's of Arts and a Master's in Theology. Not exactly where you would expect a businesswoman to emerge from."

Renee's decision to pursue real estate development in the late 1990s stemmed from her deep-rooted desire to pursue the life she wanted in a province she loved, and in seeing a need for housing that met the needs of the community. "I saw an opportunity to make a difference in Kelowna by creating attainable housing," says Renee. "And at the same time, I was creating a business that could employ people for decades to come."

That's when Renee founded Troika Developments, armed with a vision to build sustainable communities that people could actually afford to live in. She eventually obtained a second master's degree to support her new endeavours. This time, she got an MBA.

As she continued to grow her business, Renee noticed a number of challenges



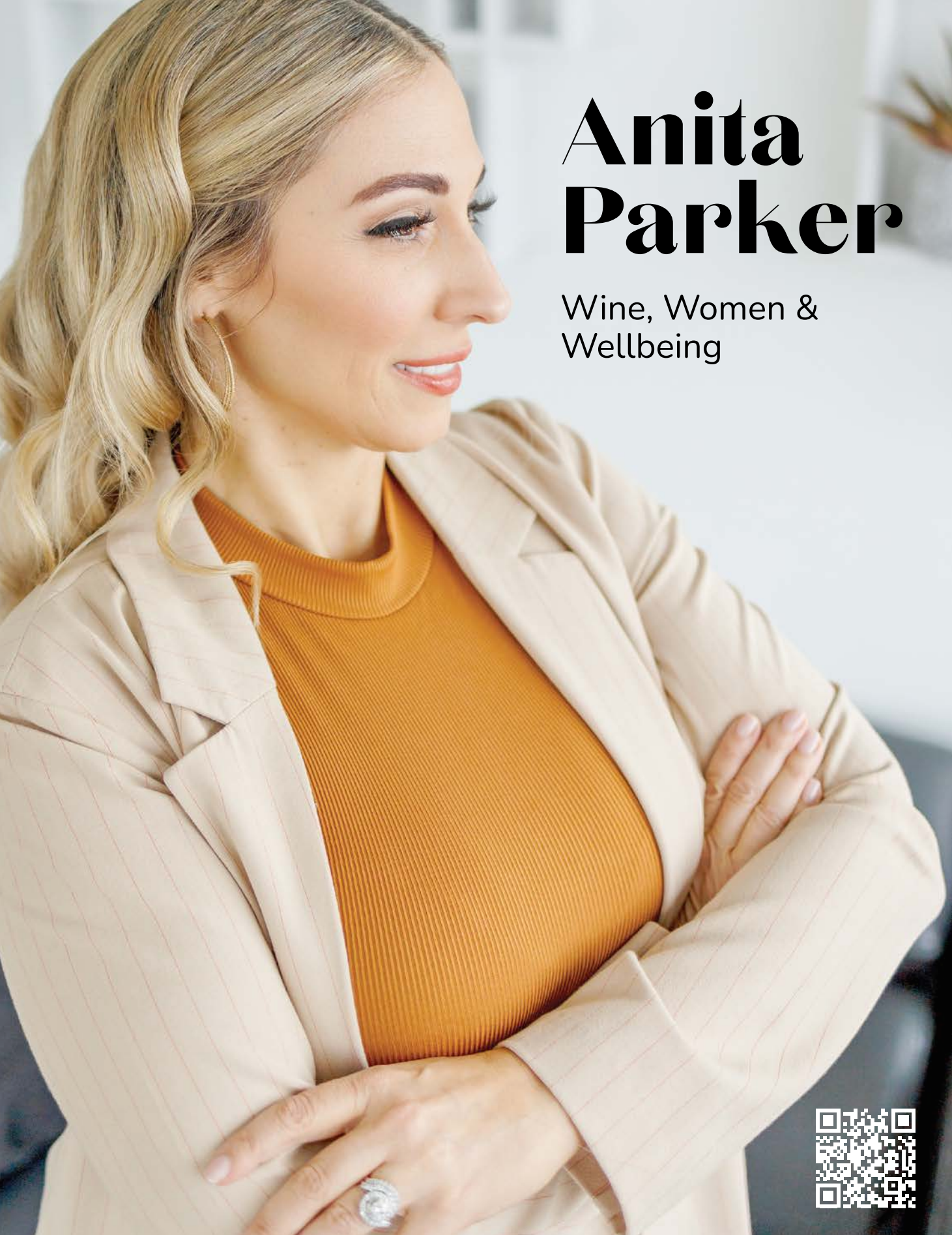
she had to overcome as a woman and a mom who owned a development company. "I didn't really think about the fact that construction was a male-dominated field," she says. "Once I was in the business, I realized I was going to need to advocate for my ideas and capabilities a little harder than I anticipated. But I believe that it became an advantage for me, as at least people tended to remember the one female developer in town."

Renee continued to follow opportunity into the political arena, while taking her passion for her community and housing affordability with her.

The pattern of challenging the norms continued when she got into politics, which remains a male-dominated field. "It's a

challenging environment for women and especially for moms," Renee points out. "For example, being an MLA requires you to travel for extended periods of time, and that can really take a toll on you when you're raising a family."

When it comes to how she raised her three children and two stepchildren while running a business and serving as an elected official, Renee says it all comes down to striving for work/life integration over work/life balance. "As a mom, you carry your kids with you wherever you go. It's not an easy path, but very fulfilling. But hopefully my life, my work and my journey will make it a bit easier for the next generation of women to fulfil their own destinies and make our world that much better."



# Anita Parker

Wine, Women & Wellbeing



## TRUST IN YOUR VISIONS, BET ON YOURSELF

Wine, Women & Wellbeing director Anita Parker discusses her path to success through service.

**S**tanding in the spotlight. Taking up space. Speaking with confidence to thousands.

While the idea makes most people nervous, it's exactly what Anita Parker has always envisioned herself doing.

It should have been no surprise that, at nineteen years old, Anita received a prestigious scholarship to chase that vision at a performing arts school. She had talent, passion and an unstoppable work ethic.

But instead of accepting the scholarship, she became a dental hygienist.

"I'd had a lot of uncertainty in my life already," she explains. "Even though I had these powerful visions of being onstage in front of thousands of people, I decided I just needed stability."

A child of immigrants, Anita was not born into financial stability. The idea of entering a career without a guarantee of steady employment was understandably terrifying. But, while she was grateful to enjoy a comfortable career, Anita never forgot her dreams.

"I just knew I was meant for something more," she reflects. "I wanted to be of service. To bring people together to create impact as a community."

Fast forward to 2017, when Anita met her now husband, Andy.

"He was a successful business owner in the food and beverage industry, and when he introduced me to that world, I suddenly felt an overwhelming sense of purpose," she

says. "I realized that entrepreneurship is really a platform for giving back to the community."

Although she was still working as a dental hygienist, Anita became more involved in her husband's businesses and her identity as an entrepreneur gradually started to take root. And then, in 2020, a global pandemic gave Anita the push she needed to make a change.

"I had been thinking about leaving that career behind for a while, as it was taking a toll on my health," Anita explains. "So I started an online business which quickly became a success. That was the launching pad for the career I've built today."

Anita now owns a number of businesses in the Fort McMurray area, runs her own coaching business and is a sought after speaker for business and leadership events. She also sits on the Board of Directors for the Central Okanagan Foundation.

But all her skills and passions really came together when she discovered Wine, Women & Wellbeing.

"When I first went to a Wine, Women & Wellbeing event in 2022, I immediately knew I had to get involved," Anita remembers. "First, I started a branch in Fort McMurray and later, I took over as director of the branch in my hometown of Kelowna as well."



Wine, Women & Wellbeing strives to offer women in business a safe space for community belonging and connection. Not only does Anita bring this vision to life in both her branches, but she has been formally recognized for her work with the organization, winning the Female Leadership Award from the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce for her exceptional contributions to the community.

But, perhaps most importantly for Anita, she finally gets to be the person she saw in her visions all those years ago.

"I thought at the time I was meant to be onstage as a performer," she says. "But now I realize I'm meant to be onstage helping people achieve their own visions of success and happiness."

"I STAND IN THE SPOTLIGHT BECAUSE EVERYONE DESERVES A SPOTLIGHT. I LET MY VOICE BE HEARD SO I CAN HELP OTHERS BE HEARD. THIS IS MY CALLING."

# Kaylyn Martin, CFP

Raymond James Ltd.

## TURNING TIME AND ENERGY INTO SMART INVESTMENTS

Financial advisor Kaylyn Martin reflects on the choices that led her to a life she loves.



Having spent her whole career as a woman in finance, Kaylyn Martin knows how to determine which decisions are right for her goals—and not just when it comes to investments.

“It has always been important to me to work for and with people who reflect my values,” she says. “What that means has changed throughout my career as my priorities shifted.”

Kaylyn started out with a 12-year career at a major bank, and will always be grateful for how supportive the team and management were of her development. In fact, one of the female managers became Kaylyn’s mentor before she even worked there.

“When I was growing up, the career options presented to me were basically lawyer, doctor, or teacher,” Kaylyn remembers. “After one year of college, I still didn’t know what I wanted to do, and my dad brought up the idea of becoming a mortgage broker.”

This is what led her into the bank one day, where she gingerly knocked on the manager’s office door.

“She opened the door and invited me right in to chat about my career options,” Kaylyn says. “By the end of it, she told me: you don’t want to be a mortgage broker. You should work for me instead. And that was the beginning.”

After many years at the bank, Kaylyn became a mom and ended up taking an extended maternity leave. When she returned, there had been some changes.

“No matter the industry, coming back from maternity leave can be a challenge,” she explains. “In my case, my role had shifted while I was gone, and I came back to find out I was moving to a different



“I LOVE WHEN PEOPLE CALL ME TO SHARE SOMETHING EXCITING IN THEIR LIVES—SOMETIMES, WE DON’T EVEN TALK ABOUT MONEY AT ALL.”

branch with longer hours. This new position was not conducive to balancing work and motherhood.”

Kaylyn knew it was time to move on. “I started at Sun Life Financial, where I was offered way more flexibility and the ability to work from home. That was the first time I saw outside the world of retail banking and discovered the full scope of finance careers I could pursue.”

After two years providing compliance supervision to financial advisors in the Okanagan, Kaylyn knew she wanted to be an advisor herself.

“At first I worked for a small local group, and then in 2022, I refined what I was looking for in a work environment and started interviewing with different firms,” she explains.

When Kaylyn found Raymond James Ltd., she instantly had a good feeling. “Raymond James has a reputation for actively supporting women in the business, which is so aligned with my passions.”

Having been at the firm for nearly a year and a half, Kaylyn’s perception of Raymond James hasn’t changed. “I’ve had an incredible first year here, and I’ve really been able to build

meaningful relationships with my clients,” she reflects. “I love when people call me to share something exciting in their lives—sometimes, we don’t even talk about money at all.”

At the end of the day, both finances and life are all about making informed decisions to meet your goals, whether that’s deciding where to invest your money or your time. “I love where I am and what I do,” says Kaylyn. “That’s all a result of the choices I made, big and small, in my pursuit of my goals. And I wouldn’t change a thing.”

# Kim Corea

Ecora Engineering &  
Resource Group



## HONOUR YOUR AMBITION, KNOW YOUR WORTH

Ecora CFO Kim Corea built a thriving career by consistently advocating for her own growth.

As the CFO of Ecora Engineering and Resource Group, Kim Corea is a powerhouse—a confident leader who isn't afraid to advocate for herself and others. But, as she'll be the first to tell you, she didn't start out that way.

"I used to love how accounting allowed me to hide in an office," Kim laughs. "Of course I had a passion for business and finance as well, but that was honestly a big part of it."

Despite her shyness, Kim thrived in her early career. When her life took an unexpected turn, it didn't phase her.

"Shortly after I started out, I took a pause in my education and career to embrace the roles of mother and wife," she explains. "It lasted a bit longer than I'd wanted, but it didn't stop me from jumping right back in."

Kim continued to build her career by taking on various accounting roles within companies as well as at public practice firms, and her ambition was nearly insatiable. She soon discovered that not everyone was receptive to her constant pursuit of growth.

"As a woman and a mother, I noticed people tended to make assumptions about my goals," she says. "I never wanted to dial back my workload. I was always asking for more work and more responsibilities and I was committed to ensuring fair and equitable compensation for my work. When an employer wasn't responsive to that, I knew it was time to move on."

All the while, Kim was still contemplating whether to go back to school and obtain her CPA designation. It wasn't until she found stability and support during a public practice job that she decided to take the leap.

"It was 2007 and I was working with a strong and compassionate female partner at the firm—she inspired me to go after what I wanted and not to settle for something just because it was comfortable," Kim says.

Completing her education after years in the field brought on complicated feelings. "I had a little voice in my head telling me I wasn't as good as the others," Kim admits. "But as always, I pushed through and, as always, it was so worth it."

After relocating to Kelowna in 2015, Kim seized the opportunity to transition into the industry. With her extensive experience in public



accounting firms, she had built a strong foundation that paved the way for her successful tenure as a Financial Controller for nearly 8 years. When an exciting Director of Finance position emerged, Kim eagerly accepted the new role at Ecora. Within a matter of months, her exceptional performance led to a well-deserved promotion to the esteemed role of CFO. "I just knew this was going to be an incredible place to work," she recalls. "In all the jobs I've had over the years, only a handful of my employers ever really showed the kind of trust I needed to thrive, and Ecora is definitely one of them."

Ecora is widely known as a company that invests in their team members and gives them the support they need to pursue their goals.

"IT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE  
WORKING FOR AND WITH  
PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN YOU,"

says Kim. "If you can find those people, you will thrive."

Today, Kim is as far from the shy young woman hiding in her office as she's ever been. And she truly believes other women can overcome shyness, imposter syndrome or lack of confidence just like she did.

"I used to have great fear about not being able to meet the expectations of an executive," she admits. "But here at Ecora I have learned that being in the C-suite is not about conforming to a predetermined personality type or sacrificing who you are. You really just need to let your passion shine through, break down the barriers of coldness and unapproachability, and show the world the amazing leader you really are."

# Delainey Larocque

## LUX Quality Homes

### DEFYING EXPECTATIONS ON AND OFF THE JOB SITE

Project coordinator for LUX Quality Homes details her lifelong career as a woman on the tools.

**D**elainey Larocque never thought she would work in an office. She tried it once at the start of her career, and it didn't take long for her to realize it wasn't the right fit.

"I was working a desk job for the company my Dad worked at in Alberta, and it was definitely not for me," she laughs. "One day they needed some shelves built in a seacan and I was happy to do it. I left the office to build those shelves and basically never went back inside."

Instead, Delainey, who had previously worked at the saw mill in her rural Northern BC hometown at the age of sixteen, found other work at the company that was more suited to her interests. She ran machinery and did odd jobs until she decided it was time to pursue a career in the trades more seriously.

"I've worked on just about every kind of job site you could think of," Delainey says. "I worked on a rock crusher, ran equipment at a mine, took a logging job, did labouring jobs of all kinds and then went into marine construction." She then went on to complete

four years of carpentry school to get her journeyman ticket.

At almost every single one of these jobs, Delainey was the only woman working on the job site.

"It was weird sometimes, especially when I worked at camps," she says. "There weren't even facilities built in some of those places for female workers."

But Delainey refused to let anyone or anything convince her that she didn't belong. "I was always determined to prove myself. I wasn't always the strongest person on site, but I could outwork just about anyone."

Unfortunately, Delainey's unwavering dedication to being the hardest worker on site eventually took a toll on her body. While working in marine construction in Kelowna, she sustained an injury that changed the shape of her career. She was no longer able to do hard labour, making the kind of work she had been doing her whole adult life unsustainable.

And that's where LUX Quality Homes came in. A design build company that specializes in custom homes and comprehensive renovations, LUX was looking to hire a project coordinator with a solid construction background and experience on the ground.

"They had actually offered me a job before," Delainey remembers. "I was so certain I wouldn't be able to do the desk job part. But then after my injury, I knew it was time to slow down."

She was unphased by jobs that would make most people nervous and never let anything or anyone on a job site hold her back, but Delainey was terrified that she wouldn't succeed in a more office-focused job.

But then, she surprised herself.

"I can't believe how much I love working for LUX," Delainey says. "I'm still connected to the construction world, and now I get to build relationships with clients during a really exciting time."

Among the things Delainey loves about the team at LUX is their integrity, transparency and of course, the exceptional quality of their work.

"This isn't something I ever thought I would be doing," she admits. "But LUX is a place I want to stay and grow for a long time."





# Angela Moore

IG Wealth Management

## GROWING WEALTH BY GROWING CONFIDENCE

Angela Moore has a track record of excelling in her career, thanks to her love of learning.

Financial planning can feel intimidating, but according to IG Wealth Management Consultant Angela Moore, it's all about education.

"People tend to get overwhelmed because they don't have the education to make an informed decision," she says. "Educating and guiding my clients to understand their financial situation is what I love most about my job."

Angela credits her love of learning and education as the reason she has always excelled in the workplace.

"I've actually only worked for three different companies, because I was constantly working my way up no matter what I was doing," she reflects. "I always took every opportunity to learn and grow, and that has always served me well, whether it was at Starbucks or here at IG Wealth Management."

Angela started her career at IG Wealth Management not as a consultant, but as a receptionist.

"I didn't know much about financial planning at the time, but once I started working in the office and saw my mom and sister in action, I realized that a lot of what financial advisors do is educate clients," she says. "And I just thought to myself: I could do that."

And so, after taking a break to have her two beautiful sons, she did.

Today, Angela has her own practice, alongside her assistant Megan Edwards, specializing in multi-generational wealth.

"It is becoming increasingly important for advisors to encourage financial literacy within their clients families, because a lot of millennials are starting to inherit wealth and aren't sure what to do with it," Angela explains. "As a millennial myself, I know what it's like to not fully understand my options—times have changed and what our parents did isn't always going to work for us."

Her approach with her clients is one rooted in trust. "Building deep relationships with my clients is what allows us to have honest, vulnerable conversations, and that's how all the planning really comes together."

Angela's tendency for upward mobility at work didn't come without challenges. "I've definitely struggled with imposter syndrome," she admits. "Finance can be intimidating at times, especially when you don't always see women represented in the industry."

She never let the feeling stop her. "I just remind myself how much of an impact I make on my clients," she says. "And I know that I am enough, and that this is what I'm meant to be doing."

# Samantha Ferguson

Lawson Lundell LLP

## FINDING OPPORTUNITY IN THE FACE OF CHANGE

Lawson Lundell LLP associate Samantha Ferguson navigates shifts in her community, career and life with a growth mindset.

Samantha Ferguson, associate lawyer at Lawson Lundell LLP, doesn't fear change. Rather, she embraces it as an opportunity to advocate for herself and build her career.

"Early on in my time at the firm, I noticed the demographic of Kelowna shifting as the city grew," says Samantha, who grew up in Vernon. "So I pitched to the partners that I get my Trusts and Estates Practitioner Designation so the firm could better support all the people moving here to retire, as well as all the business owners who

had experienced so much growth as the population boomed."

The partners quickly got on board and Samantha has been practicing trust and estates law ever since. She also

continues to serve clients in the corporate and commercial space.

Samantha's firm has also undergone a few changes in recent years. When she started at the firm in 2015, it was known as Farris LLP. In 2022, the Kelowna firm left its relationship with Farris LLP and

resumed operating under its former name, Petraroia Langford LLP. Then in 2023, Petraroia Langford LLP joined Lawson Lundell LLP and just recently celebrated one year since this merger.

This change has been hugely beneficial to both Samantha and her clients. "Now that we are part of a larger firm with access to more resources and specialists, we are really able to offer full-service support to our clients."

Last year, Samantha navigated another big life change when she became a mother. "Parenthood can be a barrier when you have a legal career," she admits, referring to how many lawyers who take parental leave struggle with a loss of momentum upon their return.

"You take a step back, even for just a few months, and when you come back you don't instantly slide back into the same place—it takes time to kick start things again. Lawson Lundell was incredibly supportive and did everything they could to make sure I didn't lose any progress at the firm while I was on maternity leave."

Samantha is actively working to grow the trust and estates practice at Lawson Lundell, and is determined to show other women that juggling a young family and a thriving career in law is possible. "There are a lot more women in law today, but we still see many leave private practice once they have kids," she says. "Find a firm and great mentors that support your growth and goals, and you will be able to accomplish everything you want and more."





## LOCAL LEADERS IN FAMILY LAW: ON ADVOCACY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND COURAGE

Jessica Spelliscy and Laurel Hogg built their legal careers on support, trust and a desire to make a difference.

Make up: Jenny McKinney  
Hair: Jenny McKinney and Shanna Whittle  
Styling: Twoblueprints Styling @twoblueprints

Challenges and barriers still persist for women in the legal profession, including gender bias, stereotypes and caregiving issues, to name a few. But fighting intractable battles is precisely what Laurel Hogg and Jessica Spelliscy do. The two women leading the family law practice at Rush Ihas Hardwick LLP have achieved success by meeting challenges head on.

"It's a philosophy as much as it's our approach to advocacy: to persevere for an ultimate goal," says Laurel. "We keep the end in sight when our clients are otherwise too mired in conflict to see the way through."

"The average person's understanding of family law is limited to divorce and separation," Jessica adds. But Laurel and Jessica assist clients from the beginning of their relationship until the end—and then some: cohabitation and

# Jessica Spelliscy & Laurel Hogg

Rush Ihas Hardwick LLP

marriage agreements; dividing property and parenting arrangements.

"Succeeding in family law is all about problem solving to create the best possible outcome. We enjoy courtroom advocacy, but we solve problems to avoid court too," says Jessica.

Family law is all about relationships: building and recomposing the family unit. "We both enjoy working with people on a personal level," says Jessica, who pulls on deep roots in the community to understand her clients.

Jessica grew up in Kelowna before leaving for university in Ontario. After attending law school in Wales, Jessica returned to Kelowna, where she soon joined the family practice at Rush. She worked closely for nearly a decade with Briana Hardwick, who was appointed as a Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia in 2022. "I've always seen a connection between the relationships I'm helping to build or rebuild and the community I live and work in," says Jessica, who balances her practice with being a mother to two sons, aged two and six, and a bonus-mother to a 21-year-old step-son.

While Laurel also grew up in the BC Interior, she came to family law differently. After finishing law school in Ottawa, she began her career with a leading litigation boutique and later a national law firm in Toronto. She returned to BC when she joined Rush in January 2021.

"I was a commercial and intellectual property litigator from Toronto when I arrived at the firm—an unexpected beginning for a family lawyer," Laurel says. But soon after her arrival, her business background made her a valuable asset on family files with corporate elements. "Before I knew it, that was my main focus. The firm has always taken on the challenging family files in the community—complex corporate arrangements, high-net worth parties—so I fit right in."

Laurel and Jessica are the next generation at the firm, but they find courage in the foundation they have been building on. "The firm's reputation is excellent," says



Jessica. "And it is earned. We are fortunate to continue in the footsteps and among the ranks of the excellent advocates who started the firm and those who are still here," adds Laurel.

And what about those persisting barriers in the field of law? Jessica and Laurel are future-facing: "We are looking forward to being part of the change as partners of the firm," says Jessica. "It's an opportunity to encourage the practice to continue to shift

in the right direction. "I embrace change and have learned to not be afraid of being uncomfortable," says Laurel.

That takes courage. It is a common thread between the two women, and one they weave through their work for their clients.



# Ashley Ramsay

Meet Ashley, a serial entrepreneur known for her leadership at Yeti Farm, one of Kelowna's beloved legacy companies. With four successful ventures under her belt since age 25, she fearlessly led Yeti Farm Creative to phenomenal growth, culminating in a profitable exit in 2023. As one of the few female founders in Canadian animation, Ashley has left an enduring impact on the industry, the Central Okanagan economy, and Canada's film sector.

Beyond business, Ashley is dedicated to empowering entrepreneurs nationwide. Her expertise aids high-growth enterprises in scaling up, exit planning, and fundraising.

With two decades of business acumen, she influences provincial policies and advocates for BC's economy and technology sector through various leadership roles.

Ashley is working with high-growth companies in North America via her consulting practice and would love to hear from you!

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# Dr. Janna Bentley

Lakeshore Vein & Aesthetics Clinic

## EXCEPTIONAL PATIENT CARE STARTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE

Dr. Janna Bentley empowers her team to achieve excellence in and outside of work.

From the nurses to the technicians to the admin staff, the team at Lakeshore Vein & Aesthetics Clinic is passionate about creating excellent patient experiences and outcomes.

Their dedication to the clinic starts with the strong leadership of Dr. Janna Bentley, phlebologist, registered vascular technologist and nationally renowned expert in venous disease. Dr. Bentley owns and operates Lakeshore Vein & Aesthetics Clinic alongside her husband and business partner, Duane Bentley.

"We really have the best team," Dr. Bentley says. "Because these treatments can be vulnerable for patients, it's important to have a team of professionals who are dedicated to providing the highest level of care in a compassionate and empathetic way."

Dr. Bentley knew from a young age that she wanted to be a doctor. She was also just as passionate about being a mother. "I didn't want to choose between being a great doctor and a great Mom," she says. "I was very intentional about shaping my career in a way that would allow me to do both."

Owning and directing her own clinic is a lot of work, of course. But it also offers the kind of flexibility that allows her to be fully present with her three children.

"That's what's great about Lakeshore Vein, for me and for our whole team," Dr. Bentley says.

"WE REALLY BELIEVE IN HELPING EVERYONE BE THEIR BEST SELVES, WHETHER THAT'S EMPOWERING OUR TEAM TO LIVE BALANCED LIFESTYLES OR HELPING PATIENTS LOOK AND FEEL GREAT."

Loving what you do, Dr. Bentley says, is the key to doing it well. And the impact she and her team have on their patients makes it a pretty easy job to love.

"We treat a lot of wonderful people who are hardworking and give so much of themselves to their work and their family," she says. "It's amazing to see how we change lives, giving patients their confidence back and helping them to be the best they can be."

Dr. Bentley and her team are always accepting new patients for medical and cosmetic services, which include Botox, CoolSculpting, SoftLift, laser facials and hair removal and, of course, top-of-the-line treatments for venous disease including varicose veins.

"We're always happy to speak with you about your goals and build a relationship from there," says Dr. Bentley. "Come in for a consultation any time."





# Deborah Batttrum

Old Friends Canada Society & Endodontist in private practice

## BLAZING TRAILS, ONE ROOT CANAL AT A TIME

One of BC's first female endodontists creates a Lake Country refuge for horses, donkeys and mules in need.

As a woman who has been practicing dentistry for 45 years, Deborah Batttrum is no stranger to breaking boundaries.

"Back then, at University of Toronto it was actually more acceptable for women to go into medicine than dentistry," Deborah recalls. "Some of my male classmates felt like the women in our class were taking away their jobs, so it could be difficult at times. The feeling was that women didn't practice yet most of the women in my class practiced for decades."

Throughout her career, she continued to blaze a trail for women in the field. When she had her first practice in Ucluelet, she was one of the first female dentists to work on Vancouver Island. After pursuing specialized education at the Baylor College of Dentistry in Texas, she returned to BC as the third woman in the province to practice endodontics. And, she remains the only woman to have served as president of the BC Dental Association. She has also served on boards at the Royal College of Dentists,

the Canadian Dental Association and as a Dental Specialty examiner for Endodontics.

But her other passion is her rescue horses, all of which live on the Lake Country orchard that houses her endodontics practice.

"I have always loved horses, and I got one for myself as soon as I paid off my debt from endodontics residency," Deborah says. "Then, when I found another horse that needed adoption, that one turned into two, and then two turned into three. And at that point I knew it was time to stop boarding them at a stable and buy my own ranch."

In 2011, she founded Old Friends Canada Society, a non-profit organization and registered charity that takes in horses, donkeys and mules who have been abandoned, abused or simply retired. Today, the organization is still going strong, with a team of wonderful volunteers who help Deborah to care for the horses, maintain the stable and even give tours to community members.

It may seem odd to get a root canal on a ranch, but Deborah says the presence of the animals actually makes an otherwise nerve wracking situation into a peaceful experience.

"Not many people look forward to a root canal appointment," she laughs. "But there is a rather calming effect when a horse or goat wanders past the window. Plus, because I only see a limited number of patients these days, your appointment can take as long as you need. There's never any rush."

If you would like to support Old Friends Canada Society with a donation or book a tour of the ranch, you can visit [oldfriendscanada.org](http://oldfriendscanada.org). Or send an email to [oldfriendscanada@gmail.com](mailto:oldfriendscanada@gmail.com).

"The support of the community enables the volunteers and me to continue to provide refuge to farm animals in need," Deborah says. "Send us a note to arrange a visit and see for yourself what a truly special place it is."

# Nikki Csek & Alexa Anderson

NowMedia Group  
& Csek Creative

## WHERE YOU INVEST YOUR LOVE YOU INVEST YOUR LIFE.

Message from Nikki Csek, CEO of NowMedia Group

Our 25 year journey has been a journey of love. Starting out in an industry that had few people working in it, let alone females is a great story to tell. We were born out of a passion to help businesses be better today than they were yesterday. To truly help guide them along their way to success whatever that may be.

Our goals in the beginning were few. We wanted to be able to stay alive for 5 years, as we knew that if we could make it five years we had a much better chance in living on in a financially viable rewarding business. We also had a goal to get a client and take care of them so that they would continue to be a client but also, likely more importantly, to tell others about us and why others should call us to help them along their business journey.

I can remember days I wanted to quit and days when I thought there was no way to climb the mountain. I can tell you now looking back that when you are "in it" you don't see the little (very little actually) teeny tiny steps you take that over time have a BIG impact. I find our story is one of building the plane as we were flying it. We did not always make the best decisions along our flight path but we were great learners. We learned that that smack hurt and we did not want to feel it again.

Because each business is unique in what they do, how they do it and the people that make it up, there is no manual. You can't simply turn to page 43 for the answer to your problem.

We have to follow our intuition, let our core values be a beacon and follow that moral compass to wherever it takes us. I think businesses are like fingerprints or ears, each is different in their own way.

In 1998 when our company first started we launched a community portal called WelcomeToKelowna.com. We were a decade and a half too early for sure. We were asking businesses to advertise their websites on a community portal that had a business directory, local news, events, classifieds and more and: guess what? They did not even have websites let alone budgets to market them. I remember specifically meeting with Best Western to convince them that building a website for the local hotel was visionary and would have them leading the accommodations industry. Growing up in the hotel/motel industry I knew very well how travelers booked rooms, by calling the 1-800 number and asking for availability. I can't tell you how many times I was told "this internet thing will pass."

It pays not to listen to people who tell you that it can't, or it won't or it's too much or it's too cheap or, or, or... Let your vision and passion be your guide. Trust your intuition. Trust your inner voice.

Our story doesn't end here.  
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TO PEOPLE WHO TELL  
YOU THAT IT CAN'T,  
OR IT WON'T OR IT'S  
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CHEAP OR, OR, OR...



## BIG SUCCESS IS MADE OF LITTLE FAILURES

Annina has owned five different businesses, but Luova Design is here to stay.

Luova Design founder Annina Kovanen-Blackwell knows what it feels like to fail in business, and she is not ashamed.

“People think of failure like it’s this big horrible thing,” Annina says. “It’s a part of life. If you don’t fail, how do you know when you’re succeeding?”

As someone with entrepreneurial blood coursing through her veins, Annina understood the ins and outs of running a business from a young age. When she was growing up in Finland, Annina would often work for her parents, who owned a number of small businesses. She even owned her own small business before moving to Canada to study on Vancouver Island.

“I studied sport and recreation because of my love for dance and fitness,” she explains. “But I always had a passion for business.”

After completing her schooling, Annina moved to Vancouver to work in event management. There, she met her now husband Burc, who shared her entrepreneurial spirit. When they landed in Kelowna in 2017, they continued to dream about what they would do next.

In 2019, they opened ooba event creative, an event rental company focused on designing unique experiences that brought people together.

But, just months after they opened their doors, a global pandemic would make bringing people together nearly impossible.

“We fought hard to keep it alive throughout 2020 and 2021,” Annina says. “Eventually it just got to be too exhausting. We decided to shut it down in October 2021.”

# Annina Kovanen-Blackwell

## Luova Design & Proper Measure Okanagan Valley

But, like all good entrepreneurs, Annina and Burc were not the type to give up easily.

“We were determined to have something of our own, so we started looking for ideas and opportunities,” says Annina. “When we found Proper Measure two years ago, it felt like a good fit for what we wanted.”

Proper Measure offers services in property documentation for builders, designers, government agencies and real estate companies. The primary services include floor plans, renderings and 3D virtual tours.

This new venture contributed to Annina developing a new interest—interior styling.

While Luova Design offers various interior styling services, its focus is on home office spaces. “With so many people working remotely now it is important to have a dedicated workspace, equipped with the proper tools and furnishings,” says Annina. “It’s also important to be able to metaphorically ‘close the door’ at the end of the day to maintain work-life balance.”

Luova Design was born in 2023, and while it is not Annina’s first business, it is a significant milestone for her. “This is the first time I’m doing this all on my own. I’m proving to myself that I can do it without my parents or my husband. That I can embrace the little failures along the way and celebrate my big successes.”



## Boss Babe VIP

Come intrigued. Be inspired. Leave empowered.

Boss Babe VIP is a diverse group of entrepreneurial-minded women of all identities who are here to elevate each other and make an impact for all women in their community and industries.

Our unique events are a place to show up unapologetically yourself, so you have the opportunity to celebrate our fellow boss babes and empower them to grow together.

It is our intent to network in an impactful way, and learn from motivating leaders across the Nation as we hear how they have pushed past the limits to rise to the top.

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## WHAT TO EXPECT



### Boss Babe Luncheon

Network with 50 entrepreneurial women & learn from Executive Business Coaches as you set your goals, align your values & enhance your mindset.



### Cocktail-Style Events

Elevating the way we network at world-class venues with delicious appetizers, lively music and opportunities to laugh and connect authentically with 150+ women.



### Q&A & Keynote Speakers

Inspiration comes when we share our journeys. We aim to bring in Speakers that will have you walking away feeling ready to conquer your next level up in life.



### Support

Being in business can be a lonely venture at times, but it doesn’t have to be with a sisterhood of empowered women who are eager to support one another.

## Connect. Cheerlead. Celebrate

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