

board nominees 2026-2027

(in alphabetical order)



Marilyn Chapman

Marilyn Chapman is a retired nurse. She was a faculty member at Vancouver Island University (VIU) for 25 years, assuming teaching and administrative roles. She has had experience on the Board of Directors for both the Haven Society and John Howard Society (now Connective), including time as Chair of the Board at Haven.

While at VIU, she taught community nursing as well as global health issues - which developed her passion for social issues and social responsibility. She has a son who has accessed services at NACL, so is invested in the success and sustainability of the agency. She and her husband were members of a group of families that had the initial idea that evolved into the Uplands Housing Development. Marilyn was elected to our Board of Directors on January 3, 2024.

Neil Cutler

Neil Cutler grew up with Left-Hemi Cerebral Palsy, which fueled his passion for improving the quality of life and connection for those with diversabilities. He was a Community Support Worker for 17 years, and has been leading Nanaimo Community Dances since 2006. The dances, originally for the local community, expanded virtually during COVID-19, drawing attendees from across North America. They now operate both in-person and online. Apart from this, Neil is a certified yoga therapy teacher and has enjoyed his role as a crisis worker, sharing wellness practices with clients who have diversabilities. His dedication was recognized in 2022 when he received the Hero Award of Excellence from the Community Social Services Employers Association. Additionally, Neil is now the Community Awareness Coordinator at the Vancouver Island Crisis Society. A strong believer in inclusion, he values the principles of NACL – and joined its Board as a Director in September 2020.

Colin Dal-Santo

Colin Dal-Santo is a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) with a background in public practice accounting. Now working at the City of Nanaimo as a Project Accountant, he regularly deals with the finances of large capital projects. With years of volunteering experience under his belt, including organizing and running clothing drives in his youth, he is a firm believer in helping your local communities thrive. In his pastime, he loves rock climbing and spending time hiking with his family and their two rescue dogs. Using his years of experience, Colin looks forward to serving on NACL's Board of Directors and aiding with their future projects. Colin officially joined the Board on May 20, 2025.

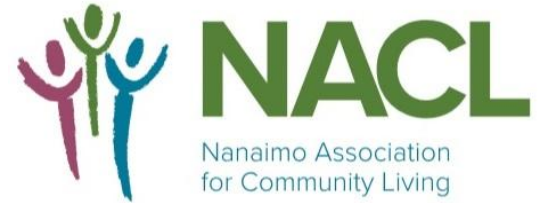
Jacqueline (Jacquie) Howardson

As a longtime community volunteer and director on several local boards, Jacquie Howardson brings a rich, diverse, and varied background to the NACL Board of Directors. A BA in Anthropology and MA in Environmental Education have fueled her enthusiasm to absorb and share knowledge acquired through both the formal institutions of learning and informal hands-on experiential learning. Having experienced educational opportunities from First Nations Elders in Alert Bay and during field trips to Peru and Kenya, Jacquie learned that the common thread running through all of these very diverse communities of people is that they have rich and valuable cultural and life knowledge to share, plus they want homes, stability, happiness, and the opportunity to blossom as individuals while realizing their full potential...which deeply parallels for people with diversabilities.

Through extensive local volunteering, from chairing a Neighbourhood Association to being a past director of the John Howard Society (now Connective), and by sitting on various City and other committees regarding homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues, Jacquie has gained extensive community hands-on knowledge on many complex social issues here in Nanaimo. She looks forward to contributing to NACL in its mission to support their diverse and vibrant community with dignity that is grounded in inclusivity and respect. Jacquie joined our Board of Directors as of April 9, 2022.

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Daniel (Dan) Johnston

Daniel (Dan) Johnston was elected to the NACL Board of Directors at their meeting held on April 27, 2015. Dan's daughter attends Actions Day Program. Dan is very involved with the COCO Cafe, a social enterprise he and his wife Trish co-created with three other families in Cedar in 2011 with the objective of providing employment and social integration opportunities for people with diversabilities within their community. Dan is a lawyer with nearly 40 years of experience. While Dan's initial practice focused on corporate/commercial matters, it has evolved over the years. Dan now practices primarily as a mediator, dealing with a wide range of Indigenous, environmental, corporate/commercial, public policy, and labour issues across Canada, with a specialty in large, multi-party conflicts. With Dan's extensive legal background and social enterprise experience, we have been extremely fortunate to have him on our Board.

Kirsten J. Madsen

Kirsten J. Madsen is the mother of a lovable son who has multiple diagnoses and special needs. She has been a full-time practicing trial lawyer for over 35 years. She is also a trained family mediator. She and her son relocated from Vancouver to Nanaimo in 2011. While in Vancouver, Kirsten served on the Board of the Developmental Disabilities Foundation, and is still a long-term, active volunteer with the Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada. Kirsten is also a past Board member of the Trial Lawyers Association of British Columbia, and has held various elected positions through the Canadian Bar Association. She is the current President of the Nanaimo City Bar Association. For many years, Kirsten was also volunteer legal counsel for a program run by the MS Society of BC. Kirsten has presented on legal topics related to disability as a lawyer, as well as from a personal perspective of having severely disabled special needs child. When not doing other things, you can find Kirsten with her son searching for animals like Canada geese and riding their adaptive tandem around Cedar. Kirsten was elected to NACL's Board of Directors at our Annual General Meeting on September 23, 2019.