

The Vancouver International Writers Festival Society
2024 AGM
Motion to Elect new Board Members

Note that biographical information on each person is below.

MOVED that the following people be elected as Directors of the Society, to serve a three-year term:

Deepthi Atukorala
Sanika Bhurke
Avalon Bourne
Daniel Getz
Anna Panzo
Jillian Stirk

Biographical information:

Deepthi Atukorala (she/her)

Deepthi became an avid reader while still a toddler, ‘reading’ books after memorising the content read to her by adults. Her fascination with words has only grown since. After graduating from The Writers Studio at Simon Fraser University, she began writing fiction and poetry in earnest. Her short fiction and poetry have been published in literary magazines and have been short listed and won awards. She is a strong believer in the transformative power of books and ideas as the foundation for an empathic and just society.

Deepthi has been a long-time attendee and volunteer of VWF and brings to the table over three decades of senior management consulting experience supporting the executive team in the financial services industry. As a Certified Management Accountant, she specializes in strategy, risk, performance, and financial management and holds a Chartered Professional Accountant designation.

In addition to literary pursuits, she loves travelling and photography.

Sanika Bhurke (she/her)

Sanika holds a MS in Enterprise Risk Management from Indiana University Bloomington, USA. She has 10+ years of experience in cybersecurity risk and compliance management at global consulting, fintech, and enterprise software companies such as KPMG, Credit Karma, Jane Software, and Atlassian. Sanika is a certified leadership coach, focusing on work life balance, and has held various leadership positions in the nonprofit sector. She was a board member on

the International Coach Federation's San Francisco Bay Area, and Vancouver Chapter over the past 5+ years. Sanika celebrates diverse cultures and inclusive voices, and has led Women and South Asian affinity groups in corporate settings.

Sanika believes in the transformative power of books and the positive impact of words in people's lives. A proud first-generation Indian-born Canadian, she is a newly published author in the LOVE NOTES From the Soul: Stories of Transformation and Hope anthology. Born and raised near Mumbai, India, Sanika writes stories inspired by her global immigration experience. After living in both Chicago, Illinois, and San Francisco, California, Sanika now resides in Vancouver, British Columbia, with her husband. She finds peace and joy in the mountains, forests, and people of her beautiful new home, British Columbia.

Avalon Bourne (she/her)

Avalon Bourne is an experienced governance leader, who has worked with association, non-profit, and regulatory organizations. She is currently the Manager, Governance and Board Relations with the Law Society of BC where she works closely with the board and executive on a number of governance and corporate matters. Avalon also held the position of Manager, Administration and Corporate Secretary at Mitacs, a research and innovation focused non-profit, where she was responsible for updating a number of key governance processes. Avalon has also served as a director of the Kerrisdale Community Centre Society.

Avalon holds a Bachelor of Arts from UBC in English Literature. She is also a graduate of SFU's the Writers' Studio program and a co-founder of the Varietal, an online platform celebrating the writing of local, emerging authors. An avid reader, she has appeared on the Varietal's YouTube channel to talk about books, authors, and her deep love for gothic literature.

Daniel Getz (he/him)

Daniel Getz is Associate Dean of Broadcast and Media Communications at BCIT, managing programs in Broadcast and Online Journalism, Radio Arts and Entertainment and Television and Video Production. Dan worked for more than 20 years as a journalist, producer, and executive producer with CBC News, including at The National, where he was part of a leadership group overseeing implementation of diversity and inclusion practices and principles in programming and staffing. He also practiced law at a large Vancouver firm, specializing in litigation, media, and employment law. He served as president of Vancouver's second largest youth soccer club and still referees on the weekends. He has two children – a daughter who has just graduated from UVic in gender studies and a son at McGill majoring in international development and playing on the varsity soccer team. Dan's wife is a dental hygienist from Dublin, Ireland.

Anna Panzo (she/her)

Anna Panzo has BA in English literature and creative writing and an MA in social work. Her background includes freelance editing and writing, marketing, fundraising, and seven years as a

clinical social worker. She currently works as grants manager for Bridge to Enter Advanced Mathematics (BEAM), a STEM education non-profit that supports underserved students from low income and historically marginalized communities. In this role, she has gained experience in researching and writing grant proposals, developing a pipeline of funding prospects, and maintaining a portfolio of existing funders. She has also served as a board member for Pomme d’Api, a French immersion preschool in Vancouver.

Anna is deeply committed to pursuing a more just, equitable, and inclusive society and firmly believes in the power of language and storytelling to impact and change the world around us. She is excited about the opportunity to bring her skills and experience to support the Vancouver Writers Fest.

In her free time, she writes poetry, tries to make a dent in her long list of “to-read” books, and enjoys playing with her children and visiting their local branch of the VPL library.

Jillian Stirk (she/her)

Passionate about storytelling, Jillian is a champion of literacy and writing as a way to bridge divides and get people talking about issues that matter. Jillian is a former ambassador and assistant deputy minister at Global Affairs Canada. Since her retirement after three decades in the Canadian foreign service, she has been involved in projects that combine education, advancing human rights, and not for profit governance. She has served as a trustee and chair on the West Vancouver Library Board, and she is currently on the board of Equitas, an international centre for human rights education. Jillian continues to undertake periodic diplomatic assignments, most recently heading election observation missions in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. A recent grandmother, she finds joy in helping to instill a love of reading in the next generation.