



# Respect Works Here

## Community Champion

**Rachael Zubick** has a life-long history of creating supportive communities that she credits to a working-class ethic, and her grandmother, who taught that what you give, you get back. “Volunteering has been a part of my life since I was a kid. Whether it was at school, a social issue, or a political issue, I don’t remember a time when I wasn’t volunteering.”

This household culture of volunteering is not charity, Rachael explains, but rather “walking alongside at the point in time where you can and lightening the burden.”

Rachael has a metaphor in mind: “We are all part of community, like a tapestry” and when individuals contribute to the whole, a strong, resilient community is created. “If one or two threads fray or get thin in spots, we still hold together because of the framework. But you have to stabilize it, or it will come apart. We are all part of that fabric.”

Rachael works in community safety addressing crime prevention through social development. “I’ve always been about people,” says Rachael, who also works with Partners in Action.

“It’s not black and white. We all make bad decisions, but it doesn’t have to incapacitate us. We model behaviour. If it’s positive, you will cause a ripple effect.”

Her experience with people from other places and cultures came early on when she immigrated from England at age two with her family. “The reasons they immigrated was to give myself and my brother the opportunities they never had, because the class system was alive and well.”

They arrived in Canada at a time of instability just before the October Crisis and consequently Rachael is aware of how politics affected her family’s connection to their new country.

She describes her childhood as multicultural, a mix of growing up in a French community outside of Winnipeg, going to school in the North End, and living in the North. Her maternal grandmother came to live with the family, shaping Rachael’s commitment to step up for others. Rachael calls her grandmother a “powerhouse” who firmly believed that everybody is equal.

As a young single parent, Rachael completed her degree while working as a journalist for the Simon Fraser University student press and volunteering with the SFU Childcare Society. This opportunity further developed her unique insight into political and social issues and contributed to her understanding that everyone is interconnected.

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~ Rachael Zubick

For Rachael, there has been no turning back or turning away. She has been fully engaged in the community, volunteering for non-profit organizations such as Upper Room Mission, Big Brothers and Sisters, Caetani Cultural Centre, Special Olympics, and many others.

Reflecting back to 1997, when she first came to the Vernon area and began work with the Chamber of Commerce and the Okanagan Economic Alliance, Rachael says, “If it wasn’t for a collaborative approach, we wouldn’t be where we are in this community. There will always be challenges, but we are far better off now than we were before.”

“I’ve seen the change in the 20 years since I’ve been here and we’ve come an incredibly long way. Many good things have come out of it.” Without question, Rachael herself is one of those good things.

