

## Women4Politics participant biographies

### Aza Elisabeth Bryson

While a high school student, Aza volunteered for a non-profit triathlon team that works with kids in East Vancouver. For the past three years, she has spearheaded a campaign to raise funds to ensure that no child who wanted to take part in swimming lessons was turned away for lack of family funding. Her efforts paid off as she raised \$2,000 this year alone.

Aza feels strongly about the power of politics to change lives and the responsibility that a politician's position holds. She is passionate about all levels of government, especially municipal, and has voted in every election possible. To gain more insight into the world of politics, she also started volunteering with a local Member of Parliament earlier this year.

Aza's personal experiences as a youth intensified her desire to help those who are in crisis. She considers it a personal duty to listen, support and amplify the concerns of people facing their own unique struggles.

Her key issues are environment and sustainability, reconciliation, and housing.

Council mentor: Councillor Lisa Dominato

### Catalina De Castro

Catalina has been involved in student politics since high school. In the past year, she has held the role of Council Speaker for the UBC Engineering Undergraduate Society and will be working with UBC Alma Mater Society council this fall. Her volunteer experience includes supporting Engineers Without Borders in Ghana and Women in Engineering UBC, where she developed presentations for elementary and secondary schools to encourage girls to consider careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Catalina is interested in public policy, governance and politics and how decisions made today will impact the future, especially in the era of climate change. Her key issues are environment and sustainability, economic development and engineering.

Council mentor: Councillor Sarah Kirby-Yung

### Jasjit Kang

Jasjit has a passion for equality and improving the underrepresentation of women and visible minorities in public life. With her peers, she initiated a project to address sexism in Indian traditions that gained a wide audience after she spoke about the issue on a local radio station. She also created a fundraiser - Change for Children - through

UNICEF to raise money for education programs for children in remote areas. She currently volunteers at SFU's Women's Centre.

Jasjit's is interested in pursuing a career in politics and is keen to understand more about the impact municipal governments have on communities. Her key issues are multiculturalism, arts and culture, and LGBTQ2+.

Council mentor: Councillor Michael Wiebe

### **Julianne Nyasulu**

Julianne is driven by a passion for social justice, socio-economic development, and gender equality. Her volunteer work includes legislative work with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, advocacy with UN Women and conducting anthropological interviews with women to document the social and psychological experiences of infertility. In the past years, she has also worked with an NGO in rural and peri-urban Malawi supporting community development and rehabilitation programs.

Julianne's interest in municipal leadership lies in the opportunity to positively influence a city's livability for every individual of that city. Her key issues are multiculturalism, urban planning and design, and the overdose crisis.

Council mentor: Councillor Colleen Hardwick

### **Kala Bryson**

Over the past two years, Kala has volunteered at Rise Women's Legal Centre, West Coast LEAF, and the Jessup International Law Moot, providing everything from assisting lawyers to training students and acting as a bailiff. Kala has also participated in an International Model UN in Japan, where youth from around the world tackled the second Sustainable Development Goal - "Zero Hunger."

Municipal government is of particular interest to Kala as she sees it as being in the position to create its own character and culture while having the potential to change the world. Her key issues are reconciliation, housing, and public transportation.

Council mentor: Councillor Melissa De Genova

### **Kathlene Louise Olivares**

Kathlene's volunteer experience includes time at the SFU Red Cross club, where she helped organize events to raise awareness and funds for issues such as Indigenous peoples' access to health clinics, mental health, and homelessness. Kathlene has a strong interest in breaking down barriers for women and girls - especially women and girls of colour, LGBTQ2+ and lower economic status - so they can fully participate in

local and national conversations and work on issues that directly affect them and their community.

Kathlene's key issues are LGBTQ2+, environment and sustainability, and housing.  
Council mentor: Councillor Rebecca Bligh

### **Laura Chen**

Climate justice and empowering women have been at the core of Laura's advocacy work, focusing on ambitious Canadian and International climate policy with the BC Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC), representing BC youth as a delegate at the SB50 UN Climate Change negotiations, and founding the Women in Economics and Policy club at UBC. She is also deeply passionate about democratic empowerment and amplifying the meaningful engagement of citizens, particularly youth and people from diverse backgrounds. She is currently working on a national campaign with Our Time, a youth-led movement championing a Green New Deal for Canada.

Her key issues are environment and sustainability, economic development, and multiculturalism.

Council mentor: Councillor Adriane Carr

### **Monisha Kiran, K.**

Working with children and youth is important to Monisha, who has volunteered with the SACY Mental Health and Wellness Club to engage youth in her community about the impact drugs and alcohol can have on their physical and mental health. With SACY, she also partnered with Vancouver Coastal Health, and the BC Lung Association on the social media campaign #NotSmokingHot to shine light on the topic of teen smoking promoted and showcased in movies.

Her political experience includes sitting on MP Harjit Sajjan's Youth Council to discuss LGBTQ2+ rights, climate issues, and other topics that matter in her community. She also took part in the Canada We Want Conference with Students Commission of Canada, a group that received federal funding this year for its Be The Change project to prevent teen dating violence.

Her key issues are environment and sustainability, economic development, and multiculturalism.

Council match: Pete Fry

### **Rebecca Baron**

Rebecca's desire to help women and children fleeing war took her to the Bidibidi refugee settlement in Uganda, Africa's largest camp for displaced persons, where she helped refugee children access basic educational resources. Locally, Rebecca has also

volunteered as a youth council member for the Kitsilano Community Centre, where she worked with other volunteers to create a more inclusive and safe environment in her community.

Her current area of focus is advocating for gender equality in academia. Her advocacy work led to Rebecca giving a talk on TEDxkids called Conquering the Gender Gap in STEM. Her passion also extends to scientific study and research, and in 2015, she received the highest national award for her research on bacterial genomes and genes capable of removing harmful airborne toxins.

Her key issues are multiculturalism, reconciliation, and LGBTQ2+.

Council mentor: Councillor Christine Boyle

### **Reyna Villasin**

Reyna is a Cebuano-born Filipino who came to Canada in 2011 with her family as landed immigrants. She is a fourth year SFU student pursuing a major in Molecular Bio. and Biochem., and a minor in Legal Studies and Philosophy. She is currently working at Environment and Climate Change Canada as part of SFU's Co-op program.

Following in the footsteps of her parents, who held a strong belief in giving back to their community, Reyna shares the same passion for community engagement and relationship-building. She is currently serving as a board member of Fresh Voices Society of BC, a grassroots movement that is youth-driven who advocates for migrant justice and systems-change.

As an activist and an aunt of three beautiful nieces, Reyna is on a journey of building collective power and fighting for dignity and transformative change into the lives of racialized and marginalized communities.

Her key issues are reconciliation, overdose crisis, and economic development.

Council mentor: Mayor Kennedy Stewart

### **Shakiba Fadaie**

Shakiba has been giving back to her community for many years - as a volunteer karate coach, working at Canada Border Services Agency over the summer, as well as helping put on nWHacks Vancouver- the biggest computer science hackathon in Western Canada held at UBC.

Shakiba's interest in municipal leadership stems from her already extensive political experience working with local city councillors to address issues such as youth homelessness in Langley. She recently served as a human rights intern for the Canadian Red Cross, helping to plan the annual International Humanitarian Law Conference at UBC, focusing on the effects of war on women and children. She has worked with various NGOs - from the Canadian Cancer Society to Forward Edge in Nicaragua - to

raise awareness on complex community issues, and strives to ignite change within her community. Shakiba also has a keen interest in ensuring newcomers to Canada also have their voices heard at all levels of government, hence her aspiration to become an international human rights lawyer.

Her key issues are addressing Vancouver's overdose crisis, public transportation, and urban planning and design.

Council mentor: Councillor Jean Swanson