



**ROWING
CANADA
AVIRON**

www.rowingcanada.org

NOMINATIONS FOR RCA BOARD OF DIRECTOR

Position – Director at Large



Dr. Jennifer Walinga

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I am eager to become a member of the Rowing Canada Aviron Board of directors because I want to raise the profile and impact of rowing across Canada and beyond. I am passionate about the ideals of sport and believe strongly in the positive power of sport to transform and inspire communities. I believe rowing has a unique potential to lift and galvanize people. In a country as large and diverse as Canada, the key to leveraging the power of our sport will be communication.

As a professor of Communication, I educate, research, and consult in public engagement, stakeholder relations, marketing and promotion, and digital, strategic and organizational communication; however, all that I have learned about communication can be learned through the sport of rowing. If Rowing Canada Aviron were likened to a crew, the board would play the role of coxswain – a unique position of facilitative leadership, communication, and vision.

I was fortunate to have been coxed by Lesley Thompson for many years and she steered us to several medals through the late 80's and early 90's. Much like a board, as coxswain, Lesley kept her eyes on the goal, the conditions, and the competition, freeing the athletes to focus on rowing. While the coaches researched technique and learned the intricacies of their pool of athletes, Lesley was the conduit for the coaches' knowledge and principles - ensuring that the overall goal of our gold medal standard was visible and kept in focus, that the vision of our unique group of athletes pulling with a whip like rhythm was sustained, and that the daily rituals and process goals for each workout were upheld to the level that our gold medal standard demanded. Like Lesley, the RCA board can be a conduit of knowledge, goals, standards, and vision for the many levels and kinds of programming within the RCA domain.

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Canadian Paralympic Committee/Comité paralympique canadien

Lesley's proximity to and familiarity with our efforts enabled her to provide continuous feedback on our personal and team goals. A board needs to be accessible and connected to the various programs that comprise RCA and design channels of communication that enable a continuous, two way flow of information. Lesley would coordinate crew meetings and facilitate the development of our race plan. Our race plan had to be a gold medal race plan, reflective of both our goals and abilities. Thus the race plan demanded complete buy in from each athlete and the race planning process was iterative and comprehensive: listening carefully to the needs of each athlete, Lesley would track what she was hearing, feed the information back to us, seek clarity and buy-in from every individual member of the crew and in this way build the alignment, conviction, and commitment that was necessary for optimal performance. A board can design similar channels of communication, coordinate opportunities and forums to share and connect, seek clarity and alignment of principles and goals, then provide a system of continuous messaging in order to sustain clarity and consistency of focus.

I have been involved at all levels of rowing: club, high school, masters, elite, as athlete, coach, parent, and board member and from each of these perspectives, I believe the common factor for success is a high functioning system of communication. Clarity and conviction bring the commitment, confidence and capacity for optimal performance. However, the key to effective communication is a facilitator who can design the systems and lead the processes that result in clarity of purpose, values, and vision. It would be my honour to contribute my facilitation skills, knowledge, training, and experience to the RCA board.