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Fun fact:

I was born and raised on a grain farm in Saskatchewan and annoy those around me with endless farming metaphors and stories. The metaphor "life is like a combine..." has endless possibilities.

Why have you joined GPC?

I am a strong believer in communities of practice: groups of people with a passion for a subject or a discipline and a craving to be better, coming together to learn from each other. Governance professionals have not historically benefited from the more formalized associations that other professions have, but that's changing as the role of governance professionals becomes more critical to support good decision making in incredibly complex times. In short—I need a tribe of governance geeks who can relate to the issues I am dealing with and who I can learn from.

How did you get into governance and your current role?

I think the thread that ties my career together is a passion for bringing the right people together and the good decisions that stem from those conversations. I left the traditional practice of law 15 years ago to join the public service as a senior political and policy advisor. I left politics and got my executive coaching certification and worked with emerging leaders. I started learning about and stepping into lots of facilitation opportunities. What attracted me to all of these experiences was this passion for supporting authentic leadership and good decision making. And then I learned about governance. I met Elizabeth Watson (WATSON Inc.) for coffee one morning and was hooked. I joined Liz's consulting firm soon after and had the incredible experience of learning from a master practitioner and someone who was as passionate as I was about leadership and good decision making. All of my varied experience seemed to coalesce as we worked alongside boards, board chairs and CEOs leaning into the challenges facing their organizations. I left Watson in 2016 to go in-house with a nursing regulator that was on the cusp of a challenging and exciting merger with two other regulatory bodies. I was attracted by the visionary direction, the governance challenges, the political complexity and the inspiring public servants leading the charge... and I never left. The governance challenges continue and I'm still learning from incredible people every day.

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What is the most fulfilling part about your role in governance? What do you love most about your job?

Although it is challenging at the time, I do love the tough stuff. I love bringing together a group of smart people, willing to bring their mastery to the table and collaborate fully with others to dig into tough challenges. My current governance and strategy role gives me the opportunity to work with amazing people, with diverse backgrounds and experiences, all aligned behind a powerful mandate to serve and protect the public. Being part of this team and being able to serve the public are incredibly fulfilling.

What is the best career advice you have received?

I had a Mentor, who had to lay down the uncomfortable truth for me once... and I think about it every day. "Great bakers bake great bread." It took me a while to figure it out, but in essence it was the permission I needed to stop trying to be great—a great coach, a great lawyer, a great governance professional—and instead focus my energy on doing good work.

What do you believe is a key topic right now in the governance industry?

Navigating system change and fully embracing diverse perspectives. How do we position our organizations, recognizing we are as a part of an increasingly complex system, to lead through the tsunami of change in which we find ourselves? Are our boards ready and able to deal with these big issues and open to questioning deep-rooted paradigms? Do we have the leadership skills around the table to not only accept diversity but to tap into this rich experience in service of finding new creative ways forward? Can we provide our boards the strategic support they need, and partner with them to navigate these tough conversations? These are the crucial questions we need to answer as a profession to ensure we stay relevant and ensure our work makes the greatest impact it can.

Where do you see, or would like to see the role of governance in the next few years?

I see our profession moving in the right direction and I think GPC plays a big role in that. I want to see governance professionals continue to position themselves as strategic partners of the CEO and board as our organizations, across sectors, grapple with complex, generational issues. We will need to ground our work with good process and theory to deal with these issues. More importantly, however we will need to foster trusted relationships, a willingness to have tough conversations, an openness to new thinking, new ways of working and perhaps even new ideas of what good governance looks and feels like. As governance professionals we can help our organizations see past the tradition narrow view of what governance is and what it means and instead position ourselves and the governance function at the very epicenter of the strategy, environmental awareness, diversity, risk assessment, leadership, and human relationships that all need to come together to navigate the complex issues our organizations are facing.