



Board of Directors — February 2026

Our Board of Directors brings together leaders from education, business, culture, and international affairs, united by a shared passion for French language and culture and a commitment to serving the Reno–Tahoe community.

OFFICERS

	<p>Josette MARSH - President</p> <p>Josette joined the board of directors of the Alliance Française of Hawaii in 2003 and served as its president until 2019.</p> <p>She was elected to the board of directors of the Federation of Alliances Françaises USA in 2010 and has served two terms as its president.</p> <p>Because she wanted to improve her overall command of the French language and learn more about French history and literature, Josette enrolled in the University of Hawaii, Manoa to pursue her Masters in French which she earned in 2011.</p> <p>In 2020, she was elected to the board of directors of the Fondation des Alliances Françaises based in Paris.</p>
	<p>Catherine FARAHI – Vice-President</p> <p>Upon graduating from high school in Tehran, Iran, in 1975, Catherine Farahi moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to attend the University of Pittsburgh, where she lived with her sister’s family. When the family relocated to Illinois, she was accepted to the prestigious Art Institute of Chicago.</p> <p>In 1978, she met and married John Farahi and joined him in Reno, Nevada, where she completed her degrees in visual arts and music at the University of Nevada, Reno.</p> <p>For ten years, she was a dedicated children’s piano teacher in Reno, during which she also sang with the Nevada Opera and served on the board of the Cambridge Montessori School.</p> <p>She remains an artist at heart as a calligrapher, sculptor, and painter, and has served on several philanthropic boards, including the Nevada Museum of Art, the Reno Philharmonic, the Reno Chamber Orchestra, United Jewish Communities, Hadassah, and Temple Emanu-El of Reno.</p> <p>Her greatest achievement is her four children.</p>



Helene PASCAL, Vice-President, Projects & Communications

Born in Morocco to Ukrainian WWII refugees, H el ene grew up multilingual, learning French and later English after immigrating to the Bay Area at age 13. She studied English with a French minor at UC Berkeley, earned her teaching credentials from UNR, and later completed both an MBA and a master’s degree in education.

Alongside her husband J.P., she founded international ventures, opened travel agencies, created Squaw Valley’s first Marketing & Central Reservations Department, organized Olympic-level ski camps in Argentina and Chile, and collaborated with Tour de France winners on cycling events. She also represented international destinations, served as President of the Tahoe Visitors & Convention Bureau, as well as the Executive Board of the RenoTahoe Winter Olympics Organizing Committee.

After 25 years in France, she returned to Reno, where she had married Jean-Pierre (JP) and raised their three children. She’s eager to share her passion for French culture through the Alliance Fran aise.



Roswitha KIME SMALE, Vice-President - Community Relations

Born and raised in Germany to Estonian parents, Roswitha is a multilingual world traveler and philanthropist who now lives in Nevada and spends part of the year in Southern France. With a master’s degree in Anthropology and a PhD in Communication, her career included teaching at the University of Colorado and the University of Denver. As a communication consultant, she worked on health-related projects and served on several major healthcare boards in Denver. She currently serves on the boards of the Nevada Museum of Art, Desert X, and the Cheetah Conservation Fund.

After purchasing a home in France 39 years ago, France became a focal point in her life. Now a widow, she cherishes time in her “magical” hilltop village. After moving to Reno, she was delighted to join the Alliance Fran aise.



Christophe SOULET, Vice-President - Events

Born French, Christophe spent his childhood in Morocco. Then he studied in France and got a Telecom engineer degree and an MBA. He built his career in the telecom industry in Africa and met Allison, his American wife in Gabon (Central Africa). They lived as a bilingual family for 25 years overseas all over Africa, Europe and the Middle East in more than ten countries.

Christophe is glad to share his passion for the French culture in all its aspects with the Reno-Tahoe community through the Alliance Fran aise, whether it’s the language, the music, the literature, the movies, the paintings, the gastronomy or the sports: France has it all!



Mavis LEPAGE-LEATHLY Ed. D, Secretary

My interest in France began years ago when I started to trace my family tree. Even when studying Norwegian in Norway, I explored the geography, culture, and history of France as well as traveling there often and with my husband after we were married.

I was happy when I joined the French Club in Reno as I was able to meet wonderful people who gave me opportunities to practice my French. I know being on the Board of Northern Nevada Alliance Française, I will have many interesting experiences that I cannot wait to share with the members.



Misha PASCAL, Treasurer

After being away from the Reno/Tahoe region for so long as a child and ultimately growing up in the Bay Area, Misha returned to attend the University of Nevada, Reno. And never left.

28 years later, he continues to raise his two young boys with his lovely wife. After receiving two degrees: one in economics and another in mechanical engineering, he currently works as a pricing specialist for NV Energy statewide.

His love for France comes from his family where his father and mother, both native speakers, raised him surrounded by the culture and the language. Being part of the Alliance allows him to continue his journey of being part of France, with the ability to share that experience with his children.

DIRECTORS



**Carina A. BLACK, PhD
Director (2023)**

A native of Argentina and a citizen of Switzerland and the US, Carina Black has lived in the United States since 1988. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Nevada, Reno in 1997 in Comparative Politics. She is the first Executive Director of the Northern Nevada International Center, an organization that manages public diplomacy programs with funding from the US Department of State and USAID.

In 2016, Black initiated a new project to resettle refugees in Northern Nevada. Black has also been actively involved in various nonprofit local and national non-profit organizations that champion diversity, social justice and citizen diplomacy. She is fluent in four languages. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, everything related to the outdoors, reading, gardening, and cooking.



Valerie BROWN

Director (2025)

Meet Valerie, a vibrant spirit living in Truckee! With a rich background shaped by her childhood in Africa and Asia, she spent her professional career as a Marketer for global brands in the SF Bay Area.

Valerie is half-French and adores speaking the language, savoring French cuisine, and connecting with other Francophiles. She looks forward to leveraging that passion, and her Marketing expertise, to support the mission of the AFRT and help grow its presence in the Tahoe area.



Joann CHEREP

Director (2025)

Joanne Cherep is an experienced administrative and operations professional currently serving as Manager of Board of Trustee Operations at the University of Nevada, Reno, where she oversees governance logistics for a 40-member Foundation Board. She previously supported senior leadership in University Advancement, contributing to major fundraising efforts and HR operations.

Her background also includes executive roles at CSAA Insurance Group and the Consulate General of Canada, managing executive offices in a bilingual English/French environment. Joanne brings strong expertise in board support, event planning, and stakeholder coordination, along with long-standing nonprofit involvement through PTA and Girl Scouts. She holds a BA in English/American Literature from UC Santa Cruz and is fluent in French and English.





Tali DAYAN

Director (2023)

Tali est née à Reno, dans le Nevada. Elle est francophone et francophile confirmée! Son amour pour la culture et la langue françaises a pris racine lors d'un stage à Paris dans la plus ancienne maison de couture, Lanvin, puis dans l'une des plus grandes entreprises de communication du monde, Publicis.

Elle a obtenu son MBA à la Columbia Business School, et est mère de six enfants qui parlent couramment le Français. Tali a l'intention de soutenir l'Alliance Française de Reno en aidant à mettre en place un programme pour enfants comprenant des cours de langue et des activités culturelles.

	<p>Christophe DUCHATEAU Director (2025)</p> <p>Scientist by training, teacher at times, and explorer by nature, Christophe brings an interesting mix of intellect, warmth, and international perspective to Alliance Française Reno-Tahoe.</p> <p>Originally from Southwestern France, Christophe left the world of French universities, first for Stanford University, then for engineering and product development. In 2017 he made his way to right here in Reno, where he sometimes teaches French at University of Nevada, Reno. Along the way, he's contributed to various patents and publications, and built a career fueled by curiosity and creativity.</p> <p>But Christophe isn't just about equations and experiments, he is passionate about language, outdoor activities, culture, connections and new discoveries . Whether he's guiding students through real-life French conversations, sharing stories from abroad, or heading out on a hike or snowshoe Randonnée (sometimes with his camera in hand), he brings energy, insight, and a genuine love of discovery.</p>
	<p>Erin EDGINGTON Director (2023)</p> <p>Erin is associate professor of French at the University of Nevada, Reno where she also serves as associate dean of academic affairs in the College of Liberal Arts. Erin earned her Ph.D. in French Literature from Indiana University - Bloomington in 2013. A specialist of nineteenth-century French poetry and art, her recent book, <i>Between the New Country and the Old World: William Chapman and French-Canadian Literary Nationalism</i> (MQUP, 2025), reconsiders the tumultuous career of French-Canadian poet William Chapman against the backdrop of turn-of-the-century (literary) politics.</p> <p>A fourth-generation Nevadan born and raised in Reno, Erin is passionate about making the richness and diversity of the Francophone world accessible to her fellow Northern Nevadans.</p>

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www.afreno.org**