

REMARKABLE WOMEN

Honouring Women From Our Vancouver Communities



Photo courtesy City of Vancouver Archives, CVA 371-1643

Barbara Howard

Barbara Howard grew up in Vancouver's Grandview neighbourhood during the 1920s when the area was still countryside. While participating in school sports days, Barbara discovered she had a talent for running and quickly became a favourite for relay teams. In Grade 8 at Laura Secord School, she won her school's senior championship. She attended Britannia High School where the track coach, Mr. Edwards, took her under his wing.

Track time trials for the 1938 British Empire Games, to be held in February in Sydney, Australia, took place in Vancouver in October of 1937. Barbara did very well at the western time trials, outrunning some stiff competition and equaling the Empire Games record of 11.2 seconds for the 100 yard sprint. Her performance earned her a spot on the Canadian track team and the community gave her a big send-off with many gifts and lots of good wishes. She was just 17 and still in Grade 11. Just before Christmas, she set sail for an incredible adventure and the 28-day journey from Vancouver to Sydney. She became the first black woman athlete to represent Canada in international competition.

Barbara ran well at the Games, coming in sixth in the 100-yard final against some very formidable opponents. She was a member of the relay team that won silver in the 440 yard relay and bronze in the 660-yard relay. Upon her return to Vancouver, Barbara went on to become a UBC graduate and the first person from a visible minority to be hired as a teacher by the Vancouver School Board.

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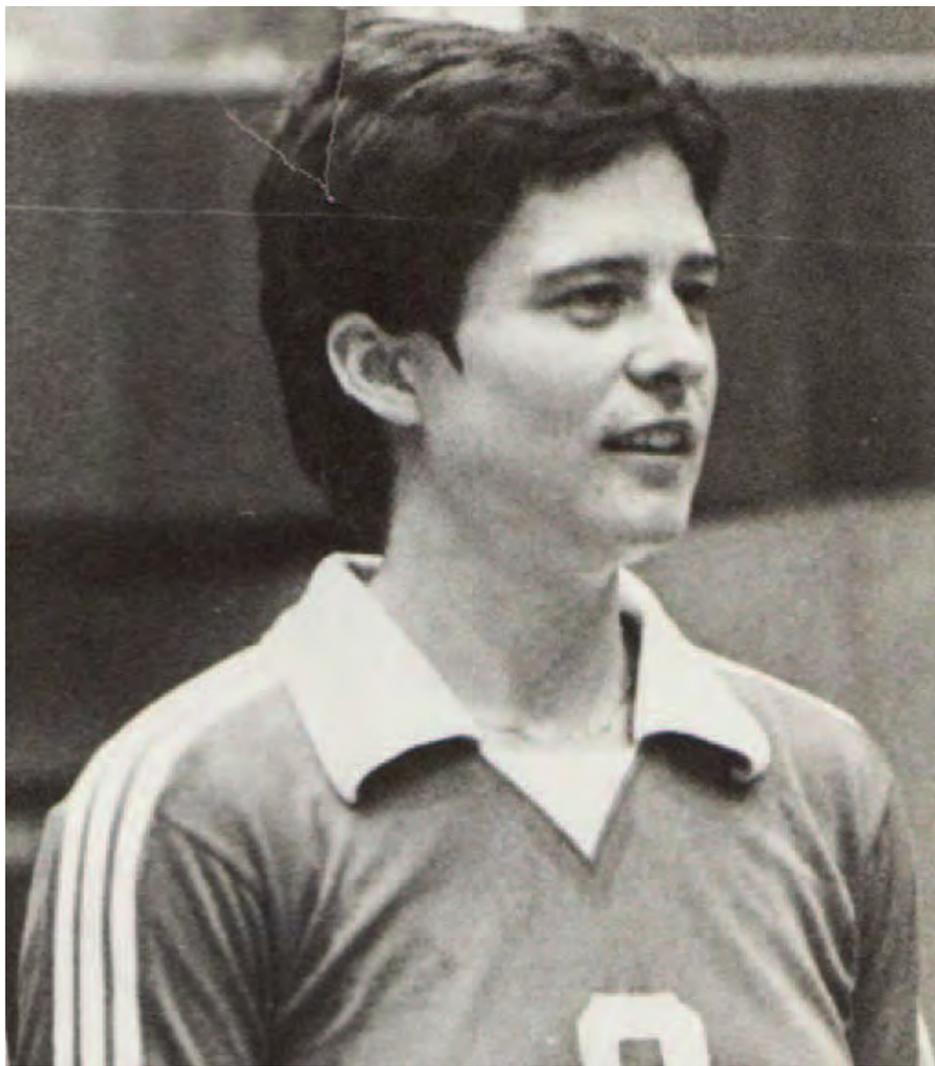


Photo courtesy Betty Baxter

Betty Baxter

Betty Baxter played volleyball at the University of British Columbia as an undergraduate and was a member of the T-Birds team that won the National Interuniversity Sport title in 1972-73 and again in 1973-74. In 1974 she was named BC's University Athlete of The Year. A member of the national volleyball team, Betty was captain of the team that represented Canada at the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games.

She began her coaching career at the University of Alberta in 1977. In 1980, she coached the University of Ottawa to a silver medal in the CIS National finals and was named Interuniversity Coach of the Year for the 1979-1980 season.

In 1979 Betty became full-time Head Coach of the National Volleyball Program, the first female, and the first Canadian, to achieve this position. She coached the national team until January 1982 when she was fired after months of speculation about her sexual orientation. She has since been an outspoken advocate for lesbian and gay issues in sport and the community.

A strong believer in developing equity in sport, Betty is a co-founder of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and the National Coaching School for Women. She was a board member and spokesperson for the 1990 Vancouver Gay Games. As a player/coach Betty capped off an impressive career with a gold medal win in volleyball at the 1986 San Francisco Gay Games and a silver medal at the 1990 Vancouver Gay Games.

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Photo courtesy Deanna B. George

Deanna B. George

Deanna B. George is a hard-working role model with an inspiring love of sport. Born and raised on the Burrard Reserve of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, Deanna is active in her community and has been very involved in sports since she was a child, when she played on her school volleyball teams.

Throughout the 1980s and '90s Deanna “pulled canoe” – Coast Salish style canoe racing. When Tsleil-Waututh Nation didn’t have a canoe club, Deanna joined other clubs like Riccol Cree, Geronimo, and Sto:lo Princess. She raced in the singles, doubles, mixed doubles, six man and 11 man races, while at the same time a busy mom of three building a career.

Deanna has played women’s soccer since 1990, for Tsleil-Waututh as well as teams for the Metro Women’s Soccer League, and continues to play with her two daughters. She also enjoys hockey, played in Native tournaments and the Vancouver Western Ball Hockey League. In 2005, she was voted Unsung Hero, nominated by her team and the League presented her with a trophy.

Deanna has worked to ensure that the Tsleil-Waututh Nation had youth soccer teams in local Native soccer tournaments. If our teams couldn’t travel to Mt. Currie and Sechelt, she would help players get on other teams, just so they could participate. Over the years, Deanna has helped her children’s soccer teams in a variety of areas, including coaching, in both North Shore Leagues and Native tournaments. In 2002, Deanna helped coach Team BC to gold at the North American Indigenous Games in Winnipeg.

Deanna B. George is a strong and devoted athlete who inspires many with her love of sport and her true sportsmanship.

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Photo courtesy the Northern Indiana Center for History

Helen Callaghan



Photo courtesy Margaret Maxwell

Margaret Callaghan

Vancouver sisters **Helen** and **Margaret Callaghan** were among the best players in the All American Girls Professional Baseball League. They grew up in the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood playing every sport available to them including baseball, basketball, field hockey and lacrosse. When men's professional baseball was suspended during World War II, the AAGPBL women's league formed in 1943. Helen and Margaret were "discovered" by scouts while representing BC at the World Softball Championships in Detroit in 1943.

A strong outfielder, Helen excelled as a batter and runner. In 1945, she was the league's batting champion with a .299 average and led in hits, doubles and home runs. Over her 388-game career, she stole 354 bases, making her a real threat on the diamond. She played four seasons with the Minneapolis Millerettes, Fort Wayne Daisies and Kenosha Comets before retiring in 1949. She passed away in 1992.

Margaret, who had been working for Boeing and had to receive special government permission to be released from her essential wartime duties, joined the league in 1944. She was a good defensive infielder, leading all third basemen in fielding average in 1944 and 1945, and had the most putouts in 1946. Also a threat at base-running, she stole 80 bases in 1946.

Helen and Margaret's story, and of all the AAGPBL ball players, became the basis for the 1992 feature film, *A League of Their Own*. In 2008, Helen and Margaret were inducted into the BC Sports Hall of Fame for their pioneering role in women's baseball.

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Photo courtesy Cliff Lemire

Ivy Granstrom

Ivy Granstrom was a remarkable woman and outstanding athlete who overcame many challenges on the way to compiling an impressive list of athletic and personal achievements. Some may recognize Ivy as Queen of the Polar Bear swims as for 76 consecutive years she was a fixture at the annual English Bay event. But Ivy's accomplishments go far beyond braving frigid waters.

Due to a childhood infection, Ivy had poor eyesight that failed gradually throughout her life. During World War II, she hid her condition to train as a nursing aide with the Red Cross and joined the air raid patrol. After suffering a major back injury in a car accident, Ivy started rehab by walking, then jogging, then running right into the record books of Masters track competitions.

Ivy started her running career in blind sports events, but later competed against sighted athletes. Ivy had a pacer, Paul Hoebrigs, who would guide her by voice, each holding onto the end of a cloth band. She was named Sport BC Athlete of the Year in 1982 and was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in 1988. In 1993, at age 82, she won seven gold medals in her class at the World Senior Games in Utah and two silver and three bronze medals at the World Veterans championships in Japan. In 1994, she broke five records, two at the Pan Am Masters championships and three at the World Masters Games in Australia.

In 2001, Ivy was inducted into the Terry Fox Hall of Fame. She passed away on April 14, 2004.

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Photo by Robin Clarke; courtesy Leona M. Sparrow

Leona M. Sparrow

Leona M. Sparrow, born in Vancouver, has been connected with Musqueam all her life. She comes from a family rich with athleticism and community governance, which is reflected in her many achievements and commitments. A multi-talented athlete, Leona has competed in many different sports including swimming, softball, field hockey, basketball, and track and field. She participated in several Junior Olympic training camps and was a member of the Inter High Juvenile Softball championship team in 1963; champion Junior Basketball team in 1964; championship Senior Basketball teams in 1965 and 1966; and of the Senior Field Hockey champions, also in 1966. All the while, she was competing in the Vancouver and District Inter High school Track and Field competitions from 1961 to 1966.

Leona received her diploma in dental hygiene and acquired her Bachelor and Masters degrees in Anthropology at UBC. While working towards her degrees, she competed in university level athletics in shot put, discus, relays and javelin for five years and basketball for two years. She competed at National Championships and was a member of the BC International Track and Field Team in 1966 and 1967 and a member of the 1966 Marpole-Oakridge Queen's basketball team that won the Canadian Junior Women's championship. In 1967, Leona was awarded the Tom Longboat Medal for Outstanding Indian Athlete in British Columbia.

For 15 years, Leona served on Musqueam Chief and Council and worked as a consultant before returning to UBC and graduating from law school. She is now the Director of Musqueam's Treaty, Lands and Resources Department, and serves on several Aboriginal service providers' boards and committees including Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society, New Relationship Trust, the Museum of Anthropology, and serves as Musqueam's liason to UBC.

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Photo courtesy Lori Fung

Lori Fung

Lori Fung grew up in East Vancouver, roller skating on East 8th Avenue, making up routines and pretending she was performing. She took up rhythmic gymnastics in 1976 and two years later, as a 16-year old, she was competing nationally.

Determined to excel in her sport, she convinced her parents to let her train in Bulgaria where some of the best coaches of the time were teaching. Her ongoing hard work and dedication paid off with a series of championship wins: she won every BC Provincial Championship from 1977 to 1988 and won the Canadian National Championships from 1982 to 1988.

When rhythmic gymnastics was made an official Olympic sport for the first time at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Lori made it her goal to qualify. She placed first overall at the 1983 International competition in Lausanne, Switzerland, and by the end of the year was ranked 23rd in the world. At the beginning of 1984, Lori again trained internationally, this time in Romania. She came in first at the Canadian Olympic trial meet, realizing her dream to compete at the Olympics. Lori upset the favoured Romanians and became the first person to win an Olympic gold medal in rhythmic gymnastics.

For her numerous accomplishments in sport, Lori was inducted into the Canadian Olympic Sports Hall of Fame in 1984; the BC Sports Hall of Fame in 1985; appointed to the Order of Canada in 1985; appointed to the Order of British Columbia in 1990; and was inducted into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in 2004.

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Photo courtesy AMS Archives 1960 Totem

Marilyn Peterson Kinghorn

A talented multi-sport athlete, **Marilyn Peterson Kinghorn** grew up in Vancouver's Sunset neighbourhood and was a top competitor at John Oliver High School. Her university career began at the University of British Columbia in 1957 with the field hockey team. UBC won the Pacific Northwest Field Hockey Tournament with rookie Marilyn finishing the season as the team's top scorer, averaging a goal a game.

For the 1958-59 season, Marilyn took on duties as co-captain of the field hockey team, joined the Thunderette basketball team and was also a member of the Women's Athletic Directorate. In 1960, the Thunderettes won their first Western Canadian University title (WCIAU), with Marilyn, at guard, one of the leading scorers in the championship game. That same season, Marilyn joined the UBC track team which also went on to win a WCIAU championship. She was the first winner of the Barbara 'Bim' Schrodt Trophy (now the Marilyn Pomfret Award) as UBC's top female athlete in 1960.

In 1960-61, Marilyn and the Thunderettes repeated as WCIAU basketball champions. Marilyn joined UBC's volleyball team and helped them to win their first Western Canadian University title. That was Marilyn's fourth WCIAU championship win.

One of UBC's top athletes, Marilyn won six Big Block awards and graduated with a Bachelor of Physical Education in 1961 and completed her teacher training in 1962. She was a member of the UBC Alums volleyball team that won both the Western Canadian and Canadian Women's championships in 1962 and 1964.

An all-round athlete of remarkable talent and strong leadership skills, Marilyn was inducted into the UBC Sports Hall of Fame in 2000.

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Photo courtesy The Siyamin Artist Cooperative

Pam Baker



Photo courtesy Lindsay Hubley

Virginia Johnston

Pam Baker, ancestral name **Hi-mi-ka-las**, is of Squamish and Kwakiutl descent. Pam played women's fast pitch for 30 years with other Squamish youth. She also played basketball, lacrosse, and soccer. Due to sports injuries, she could no longer play and began her journey to become one of the most 'inspirational coaches', an honour bestowed upon her by the All Native Basketball Association of British Columbia. In 1988, she established her business, Touch of Culture, and developed self-esteem, life skills and cultural awareness workshops for Aboriginal youth. She is the coach of two North Shore Wolves, Intermediate, and Senior men, and hoping to start a new junior team. In 2009, Pam coached the North Shore Wolves Intermediate Basketball team to the All Native Championships.

Virginia Johnston is of Coast Salish and Ojibway descent from the Squamish and Brokenhead Nations. She is a youth ambassador, spokesperson, role model and mentor for the First Nations Snowboard Team. Included in her list of many accomplishments are being featured in the Aboriginal Sports Gallery at the BC Sports Hall of Fame, and recipient of the 2008 Proclamation for International Women's Day by Mayor Samuel Sullivan, in recognition of her sharing her personal story to get where she is in athletics. Going into her fourteenth season of snowboarding, she is one of the elite team competitors disciplined in FIS boardercross and will be training in half pipe and slope style. Most recently she was selected to be a 2010 Olympic Torchbearer in Qualicum, BC on November 2, 2009.

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Photo courtesy Rich Lam / UBC Athletics

Poonam Sandhu

Born and raised in Vancouver, **Poonam Sandhu** first began playing field hockey at age nine for the India Club. Naturally athletic, Poonam also played soccer for the Killarney and KLM soccer clubs, and played field hockey, basketball and ran track for John Oliver Secondary. For her efforts and achievements, she was named the school's Athlete of the Year for five consecutive years from 2004 to 2008.

Poonam has played field hockey at the provincial level since the age of 14 and began training with the National Team in May of 2008. In June 2009, she traveled with the team to Kazan, Russia to play in her first World Cup qualifying tournament, the Champions Challenge II. In August 2009, she began playing field hockey for the UBC Thunderbirds, traveling with the university squad to Argentina where they competed against various club teams from Buenos Aires and Rosario.

Poonam's first season with the T-Birds was a successful debut: she earned a starting forward position and was named a candidate for Rookie of the Year. After becoming CanWest Champions, the UBC Thunderbirds went on to win their record 12th McRae Cup and were crowned CIS 2009 Field Hockey Champions. Poonam earned Player of the Game honours during the tournament in UBC's match against the University of Toronto.

As a carded member of Canada's National Field Hockey Team, Poonam is training for the 2010 World Cup qualifying tournament and the 2010 New Delhi Commonwealth Games.

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Photo courtesy Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V263/NA-3863, photo by Byron Harmon

Vancouver Amazons

Though Vancouver's hockey history is a long one, the achievements of the **Vancouver Amazons**, a women's team from the 1920s, is largely forgotten.

The Banff Winter Carnival was an annual event that hosted an invitational women's hockey tournament and in 1921, the Vancouver Amazons were the first team from the city to participate. Though they were defeated in the final, the rookie Amazons had played well.

Frank Patrick, owner of the Amazons, and of the men's professional team, the Vancouver Millionaires, organized a tournament for the Amazons against the Seattle Vamps and the Victoria Kewpies. The Amazons went undefeated during this tournament and did not allow any goals against on their way to becoming West Coast Women's champions and the first women's team to win an international competition.

The Amazons returned to Banff in 1922 with experience and confidence. The team consisted of captain Phebe Senkler and her sister Norah at defense; forwards Elizabeth Hinds, the first BC woman to score a hat trick; Kathleen Carson; Nan Griffith; and goaltender Amelia Voitkevic. The roster was rounded out by Lorraine Cannon and Mayme Leahy.

In the championship match up, the Amazons once again found themselves facing the Calgary Regents. With the Regents leading 1-0, Kathleen Carson scored late in the third period to send the game into overtime. Kathleen, who had, according to the *Vancouver World*, "a shot like a man's", scored again in the extra frame to give Vancouver the win. The Amazons won the Alpine Cup and became "lady champions of western Canada".

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Photo courtesy Yuka Chokyu

Yuka Chokyu

Born in Japan, **Yuka Chokyu** came to Canada in April 1989. In 1990 she was involved in a car accident that left her paralyzed and wheelchair dependent. After being discharged from the GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre in 1991, Yuka took up wheelchair tennis, playing at a public court in Vancouver's Dunbar neighbourhood. She immediately fell in love with the sport. Inspired by a wheelchair athlete who came from Japan to participate in a local tennis tournament, Yuka started competing on the International Tour in 1995, and has not looked back since.

She first made the National Team in 1997. The following year, she was ranked sixth in the world in singles, becoming the first Canadian player to qualify for the prestigious Wheelchair Tennis Masters. She has won numerous awards including Sport BC Disabled Athlete of the Year (1998) and the Premier's Athletic Award (1996-1999). She was named Female Athlete of the Year by the BC Wheelchair Sports Association (1997 and 2001) and by the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association (1997, 1999, and 2001). Tennis Canada named her Female Wheelchair Athlete of the Year in 2000 and 2001 and Wheelchair Athlete of the Year in 2005 and 2006.

Her career accomplishments to date also include winning 22 singles titles, 48 doubles titles and competing in the Beijing 2008, Athens 2004, and Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games.

She currently trains six days a week, demonstrating the hard work and dedication necessary to achieve her goals of a World Top 8 singles ranking and to qualify for the 2012 London Paralympics.