

REMARKABLE WOMEN: HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Sarjeet Singh Jaggal

AJIT KAUR SINGH

In the 1950s, Ajit Kaur Singh moved from the Okanagan to Vancouver, bringing her strong will and determination to the Collingwood neighbourhood.

The story begins in 1929 when Ajit and her mother came to Canada from India, arriving in Kelowna to join her father on his farm. When he died, she helped support the family, worked on their 20 acre apple and cherry orchard, attended school and assisted her widowed mother in raising her five younger siblings. In 1946, a year before Indo-Canadians received the right to vote in BC, the family bought a house in town to be closer to good schools. Some of the local residents and organizations protested the purchase to the city, leading a local newspaper to carry the story of 25-year-old unmarried Ajit, who stood up against racial discrimination. She was adamant that the family, regardless of the colour of their skin, had the right to live in the city and courageously held her ground as the matter went before City Council. With a supportive neighbour's help she succeeded, and the Singh family moved into their new home. She became a highly respected member of the Kelowna community. She helped both Sikhs and non-Sikhs with written and verbal translations, and shared her acute business sense and negotiating skills with local farmers and neighbours. Ajit's pioneering family portrait was featured on a Canada Post commemorative Sikh First Day Cover, issued in 1999.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN:

HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy City of Vancouver Archives

EVLYN FENWICK FARRIS

Evlyn Fenwick Farris was an education and social activist who was dedicated to promoting higher education for women. She was raised in Nova Scotia in an environment where schooling was valued and graduated from Acadia University with Masters of Arts degrees in Philosophy and German. In 1905, Evlyn married lawyer J. Wallace de Beque Farris and they moved to Vancouver. She founded the University Women's Club of Vancouver (UWCV) in 1907 and became its first president. UWCV supported socially progressive issues, and over the years its members included Judge Helen Gregory McGill, Ida Halpern, Laura Jamieson, Ethlyn Trapp and Mary Ellen Smith. Evlyn pressed for the construction of the new University of British Columbia's Point Grey Campus and for many years served on the Senate and Board of Governors. She received honorary doctorate degrees from both Acadia University and UBC.

Evlyn Farris fought to improve conditions for women and children and believed women and men should have equal education. In 1912, when Mabel French was refused admission to the bar because women were not yet legally "persons," Evlyn took up the cause. She challenged gender-biased guardianship laws, helped establish Parent Teacher Associations in the city, and worked towards securing the Mother's Pension. She successfully campaigned for better working conditions for all women, from sales clerks to physicians. As members of Vancouver's social elite, the Farris' Shaughnessy home, Wellelyn, was located across from the famous Hycroft mansion, the UWCV's home since 1962.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs.



REMARKABLE WOMEN: HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Delbert Guerin left-Edna Grant, photo Susan Point,
right-Adeline Point, photo Tammy Harkey

GERTRUDE GUERIN

Gertrude Guerin (nee Ettershank) was born in the village of Mission Reserve, B.C. in 1917. She was elected to the Musqueam Council as Councilor in 1956 and 1958 and elected Chief in 1960. The first First Nation's woman to be elected chief of a First Nation in Canada, the Musqueam First Nation, Gertrude's nickname, "old war horse," stuck with her, even 20 years after she left politics. In 1936, Gertrude married Victor Guerin of Musqueam and together they raised four children in North Vancouver before moving to Musqueam Nation in 1954. There, Gertrude became an advocate for the Musqueam people, especially around issues of fairness and non-discrimination in the school system.

She was the founder of the Vancouver Friendship Centre and played key roles in founding the Vancouver Police Liaison Society and the Native Education Centre. Although she passed on in 1998, Gertrude is remembered for her strength, determination and love for her people.

Edna Grant (left background) and Adeline Point (right background) were, along with Gertrude, remarkable Musqueam women who worked to promote and educate the community. Owsally'e-Adeline contributed a wealth of knowledge that allowed linguists to develop and complete the UBC Musqueam Language Program. E'xwe'tiye-Edna was a strong cultural leader and played a crucial role in preserving traditional teachings and strengthening the art of Salish weaving and knitting.

They all left a strong cultural legacy framed upon pride, virtue and dignity.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Joleene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN:

HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



HANAKO SATO

Hanako Sato was an educator who through her teaching helped the Japanese language and culture live on for thousands of Vancouver Japanese Language School (VJLS) students. Her students respectfully called her Sato sensei, meaning teacher, and in turn, she regarded them as her children. For almost half a century, her detailed record keeping and office management skills contributed significantly in maintaining the high standards of this Japantown school and its international reputation. With her spouse, VJLS principal, Tsutae Sato, this wife and husband team produced books that can still be found on the shelves of The Tsutae and Hanako Sato Memorial Library.

The school was a community mainstay. Hanako's Japanese-Canadian students would attend English public school all day, then come to classes at the VJLS. She helped establish the Boshikai, a women's group whose activities included fundraising for school supplies, bazaars, and other social activities. During the WWII Japanese evacuation from the west coast, Hanako and her husband lived in Lacombe, Alberta. The Satos returned to their school positions when the VJLS reopened in 1952. Now a designated heritage building, the school on Alexander Street was the only property in Vancouver returned to the Japanese people after the war. The Sato's home on Victoria Drive often hosted tea get-togethers for students, and after retiring in 1966, Hanako continued her Parent Teacher Association work and helped establish scholarships.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN: HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections

HELENA ROSE GUTTERIDGE

Helena Rose Gutteridge, a political and labour activist, had already been campaigning for women's rights in Great Britain long before coming to Vancouver in 1911. Without delay, she began her journey in the shaping of British Columbia's social reform legislation. She was a dedicated suffragist and organized the BC Women's Suffrage League in 1913. In 1917, eligible white women got the right to vote in BC. Helena was living on Triumph Street in the Hastings neighbourhood when she was elected Vancouver's first woman alderman in 1937 as a Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) representative.

Helena was also a labour activist who fought to improve conditions for working women. As a tailor herself, she organized laundry and garment workers in the Tailor's Union and was an executive member of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council. She was an advocate for equal pay for equal work and was the committee chair of the Minimum Wage League. Helena spoke out for working class women like herself, and fought for low-income affordable housing, and the Mother's Pension Act. During the Depression she raised her voice publicly when she objected to excessive civic money being spent on the Royal visit. Helena Gutteridge was a pacifist, and during her lifetime campaigned for peace and justice. During World War II she was a welfare manager at the Slocan Valley's Lemon Creek Japanese Internment Camp. Vancouver's champion for women's rights died in 1960.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs.



REMARKABLE WOMEN: HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Shelagh Day

JANE RULE

Jane Rule lived in West Point Grey and was a renowned writer, outspoken activist, and out lesbian who fought for the right to freedom of expression. She published many novels and numerous short stories, as well as essays and social and literary critiques. She received numerous literary and lifetime achievement awards, including the Order of British Columbia in 1998 and the Order of Canada in 2007, our nation's highest civilian honour. Born in Plainfield, New Jersey in 1931, she met her life partner, Helen Sonthoff while teaching at Concord Academy in Massachusetts. They moved to Vancouver in 1956, leaving behind the dangerous environment of the McCarthy era.

Jane taught in the English department at UBC and there received an honorary doctorate in 1994. Jane and Helen's Point Grey home became a gathering place, a salon, for Vancouver's literary and artistic communities. Jane was known for her generous spirit and helped many newcomers to the city find places to live and get connected. She was a true pioneer when she courageously published her first novel, the lesbian classic *Desert of the Heart*, in 1964 when homosexual acts were still criminal offences under Canada's Criminal Code. Jane and Helen took their strong community spirit to Galiano Island when they moved there in 1976. Jane continued to write, gave children swimming lessons, and provided financial support to the Islanders. Jane Rule was an honoured community builder in the true sense of the word.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN:

HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Carleen A. Thomas

LILLIAN C. GEORGE

Lillian C. George was born in 1919 in North Vancouver. Mrs. George was an integral part of the Tseilil-Waututh (People of the Inlet) community and exemplified leadership through hard work and compassionate dedication to her people. She spent many years as Secretary Treasurer for the Band which included being the entire Education Department and Social Development Department. Through her efforts an After-School Daycare was created, and for a couple of years, a local teacher volunteered to read with the children, preparing them for school. Mrs. George also made connections to the local surrounding communities: she was a member of the Victoria Order of Nurses, the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire and sat on the Board of the North Shore Chapter of United Way of Canada. She volunteered with Meals-on-Wheels and visited local schools to teach about the Tseilil-Waututh People (Burrard Indian Band). Education was the way out for our people, so she encouraged the children to seek higher education. She also showed leadership by joining the local Parent-Teacher Association, pointing out that we need to become involved with our children's education.

Mrs. George had profound faith and it showed in her volunteerism: she drove elders to doctor appointments and special needs children to school, over and above her regular work day. She made time to participate in the Indian Homemakers Association, and at one point joined in a national protest to protect the health care rights of aboriginal peoples. To further connect and network, Mrs. George created a local IHA club on our Reserve, which then connected with other women's church groups and did clothing drives for First Nations communities in the North. Mrs. George worked tirelessly networking and building awareness among the non-native community of the plights and strengths of the First Nations communities. Most importantly, she left a legacy: she passed on the teachings of "giving back to the community" to her children, her grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN:

HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Adrian R. Zabor

MARY LEE CHAN

Mary Lee Chan challenged the gender and cultural expectations of her day by becoming a prominent Vancouver civic activist. Born here in 1915, she grew up on Slocan Street. In 1924, the family returned to China. Although highly unusual for the times, Mary, a girl, was given a formal education, and later taught at a government school. Her strong sense of community spirit grew as she helped her family and neighbours through the hardships of war and village life. With her spouse, V.J.S. principal, Teutae Sato, this wife and husband team produced books that can still be found on the shelves. Mary returned to Vancouver in 1947, the same year Canada's Exclusion Act was repealed, and lived with her sister near Cambie Street and 26th Avenue. She worked as a Chinese teacher, at the Chinatown family store, and in Gastown's garment factories. Mary, husband Walter, and their children were living on Strathcona's Keefer Street when their family home was one of the many scheduled to be bulldozed as part of the City's 1960s and '70s urban renewal project and freeway construction. Along with her daughter Shigley, she was instrumental in establishing the community-based Strathcona Property Owner and Tenant's Association (SPOTA). Serving on its executive and membership committees, she successfully raised community awareness, support and funding, and even canvassed door to door. SPOTA negotiated with the three levels of government to successfully transform the demolition program into a restoration and preservation project. This opened the doors for future citizen groups in Canada to have influence on the government's community planning decision making, a practice that continues today.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator- Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN:

HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Lee Crowley

MAUDE CROWLEY

Women like Maude Crowley led the way toward shaping Vancouver into the city it is today. Maude was the matriarch of the pioneering Avalon Dairy family. Born in New Brunswick in 1876, she moved with her family to Newfoundland where she married Jeremiah Crowley. They arrived by train in Vancouver in 1906 at a time when there was still growth in the local agricultural communities. The Crowleys secured land in South Vancouver and started a ranch amidst the other scattered farms and ranches of the Cedar Cottage and Collingwood neighbourhoods.

By 1913 they had a full-time dairy business. Maude performed the vital domestic duties involved in the raising of 13 children and also took on many of the other responsibilities required to run a successful business. As needed, Maude milked cows, sold eggs, and sometimes ran the dairy when Jeremiah was away working as an iron moulder. In their two-story Victorian farmhouse, family life was the centre of her world. Maude found great delight at the many family gatherings that occurred over the years. Jeremiah died in 1950, and three of her sons ran the business with Maude as Avalon's president. Fifty years after first arriving in Vancouver, Maude Crowley passed away in 1956 leaving seven sons, three daughters (three children predeceased her), 29 grandchildren and 12 great-grand children. As a strong and resourceful woman, Maude played an active role in the success of BC's oldest family-owned independent dairy.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design - Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs

REMARKABLE WOMEN: HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy George Yip

NELLIE YIP GUONG

At a time when there was a strong anti-Asian climate present among many of Vancouver's dominant British society, Nellie Yip Guong was building bridges between Chinese and non-Chinese cultures. She was born in 1882 of Scottish descent in Nova Scotia and came to Vancouver in the early 1900s via New York with her husband, Charles Yip. He was a member of Vancouver's prominent Yip Sang family, the famed Chinese merchant and CPR contractor. Nellie and Charles lived in the family home on East Pender Street for many years with Sang's 23 children and three wives. Canada's Head Tax and Exclusion Act severely restricted immigration by Chinese women so their numbers were few in Chinatown's existing bachelor society. A white woman married to a Chinese man was virtually unheard of. Nellie learnt Chinese languages at night school, later easily speaking five Chinese dialects. Her skills as a translator were remarkable.

Nellie contributed significantly to improving the quality of health care provided to Vancouver's Asian population. She worked toward creating equality in the medical system and spoke out against the discrimination Chinese patients faced in hospitals. Nicknamed "Granny Yip," Nellie acted as midwife and cared for many of Chinatown's young ones, helped with community adoptions, and also adopted a daughter. Nellie's connections to the Chinese community varied, from being a member of the Chinese Empire Ladies Reform Association, to attending the Chinese theatre. Nellie Yip Guong remained a popular and important community worker in Vancouver and died in 1949.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design - Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN:

HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Jewish Museum and Archives of BC

SYLVIA ABLOWITZ

Sylvia Ablowitz was a humanitarian and is the namesake for English Bay's Sylvia Hotel. She grew up as Sylvia Goldstein in the West End in a home filled with live music and dancing on weekends, playing tennis in Stanley Park and ice skating on Lost Lagoon. The building opened in 1913, but the Goldstein's lost it shortly thereafter due to hard economic times and the oncoming war. Sylvia was also a champion long distance swimmer, taught by the famous lifeguard Seraphim "Joe" Fortes, winning races that covered the distance between English Bay and Kitsilano Beach. Sylvia graduated in 1921 with a Bachelor degree in French from UBC, lived in California for a while, and worked for a labour union.

Sylvia's impressive dive from a tugboat while on a Jewish singles cruise in Indian Arm caught the eye of her future husband, Harry Ablowitz. They married in 1928 and together founded Vancouver's successful Ablowitz Realty Ltd. Sylvia was on the board of many Jewish community groups and helped establish a community centre, the Louis Brier Home and Hospital, and a golf course. She was a member of the National Council of Jewish Women, a life member of Hadassah, and a volunteer into her mid-90s with the Jewish Family Service Agency, doing telephone home checks for isolated seniors. In 2002, the Sylvia Hotel flew its flag at half-mast when Sylvia Ablowitz died at the age of 102.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN: HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy City of Vancouver Archives

TOSCA TRASOLINI

The remarkable Tosca Trasolini was an adventurous trailblazer from Vancouver's Italian community. Defying her expected gender role, she received her pilot's license in 1936 and co-founded Canada's legendary, first all-women's flying club, The Flying Seven. Fellow club members included Betsy Flaherty, Alma Gilbert, Rolie Moore, Jean Pike, Elianne Roberge, and Margaret Fane Rutledge. The Flying Seven's activities made national headlines. Their famous 1936 "Dusk to Dawn" flying patrol continued throughout the night in relay style with young Tosca as the first pilot in the air. The club's spectacular 1940s "bomphlet" raid dropped 100,000 pamphlets on Vancouver appealing for donations to purchase World War II war planes. They staged air shows, encouraged women to become pilots, and ran a women's aviation training centre teaching everything from ground school courses to flying theory and parachute packing.

Tosca excelled in the many challenges she took on. She was the highly skilled legal secretary for lawyer and judge, Angelo Branca. An outstanding athlete, Tosca won numerous cups and awards in track and field, rode motorcycles, played lacrosse, basketball, and beat out all the male competition in a 20-foot greased pole climbing contest. Tosca was community minded and served as an executive member of the Women's League of the Sons of Italy. She also wrote a column called "Flight" in the Italian language newspaper, *L'Eco Italo-Canadese*. Tosca married and moved to California, and died in 1991.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design: Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN: HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Tracey McDougall

VIE MOORE

Viva "Vie" Moore was born on Salt Spring Island in 1901, a place where some of the first Afro American pioneers to BC eventually settled. Shortly after arriving in Vancouver, she opened her legendary Strathcona eatery in 1948, one of many in a long tradition of women-run chicken house restaurants in this area. Vie Moore's Chicken and Steak House was located just off Main at 209 Union Street.

For almost three decades her East End restaurant was the social hub of Hogan's Alley, an ethnically diverse neighbourhood which was the heart of Vancouver's black community. Vie's renowned eatery brought together a social and racial mix of people from all over the city who came to dine on her famous Southern fried cooking. Plates of fried chicken, steak, biscuits, salad, french fries and peas were served on crisp white tablecloths, cleaned and pressed at the local Chinese laundries, while her favorite collection of blues tunes played on the jukebox. As a fan of live music herself, Vie's business was also a gathering place for many of the well known black, and some white, entertainers who were in town performing at the local nightclubs like The Cave Supper Club. In her community, Vie was known for her generosity and kindness, and throughout the years provided many jobs for local women. In the early 1970s the Georgia Viaduct construction destroyed most of Hogan's Alley, but the iconic restaurant survived. After a remarkable life, Vie passed away in 1975.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs



REMARKABLE WOMEN:

HONOURING WOMEN FROM OUR VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES



photo courtesy Squamish Nation Education Department Photo Archive

SUSEL-LAT-T, VIOLET RIVERS

Violet Rivers (nee John), born November 1, 1920, was an extraordinary Squamish woman, egalitarian and political activist. Like other Squamish leaders of the time, she was highly visible in the St. Paul's church community. The Potlatch legislation prohibited First Nations from holding public gatherings so the community held Monday night readings and later addressed political issues. Violet was active in the Capilano Community Club (CCC) which promoted the maintenance of Squamish culture and values. They also raised funds to support the Chiefs work on Aboriginal title and rights.

In 1963 the Canadian government granted Aboriginal people the right to vote. Violet worked tirelessly within the Liberal Party to ensure the Squamish people's voice and vote was important. She believed in the values that the Liberal party offered and forged strong links with Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Members of Parliament of the North and West Vancouver ridings.

Violet collaborated with Squamish contemporary Edward Nahanee, a fellow Liberal party member and representative to the Native Brotherhood, to bring forward valuable political information to the B.C. Native Women's Society. As a political activist, Violet funded her own travel and activities by becoming the first Native Avon sales representative.

She was supported by her beloved husband Ernie Rivers and her two traditionally adopted daughters Shirley and Darlene Rivers. She passed away on December 7, 1977, but she influenced generations of Squamish leaders including Barbara Charlie, Julie Baker and Deborah Jacobs who work within the broader community and political spectrums. Paramount to Violet was her belief that Squamish women's issues must be heard and addressed in their own voices and by their own authority.

This project was made possible by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture Office
Special thanks to all the community members who assisted with this project.

Historical Interpreter - Jolene Cumming First Nations Participation Coordinator - Kamala Todd
Poster Design- Tania Willard, Red Willow Designs.