

# HONOURS & AWARDS



## 2019 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients

### Joe Average of Vancouver

Joe Average is a Vancouver artist, philanthropist and internationally recognized HIV/AIDS advocate.

A self-taught Canadian pop-art artist, for the past 40 years Average's bright, playful work has been featured on everything from international HIV/AIDS conference posters to celebratory LGBTQ street banners in Vancouver's West End, the body of an electric car and a commemorative Canadian stamp.

Diagnosed HIV positive in 1985 Average considered it a wake-up call, giving him a renewed sense of purpose. Now 61, he has spent the past 33 years raising awareness through his distinctive artwork, donating at least twice as much art than he's sold.

Despite his own struggle with the disease, which eventually prevented him from making new paintings, Average continues to donate prints and newer digital photographic work to support community-based arts, health care and children's programs.

Along the way he has helped raise HIV/AIDS awareness. He continues to help reduce stigma around the disease by publicly share his personal story.

In 1991, Average was one of 50 Canadians invited to dine with the late Princess Diana at Rideau Hall in Ottawa and was asked to meet with her privately, which he describes as the experience of a lifetime.

Average's work has been described as "a visionary kaleidoscope of colour, creativity and compassion" and it has come to symbolize love and inclusivity for all members of our community.

Average has received many awards and honours, including civic merit awards, the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award in 1998 and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for Outstanding Community Achievement in 2002. In that year, Mayor Philip Owen issued a civic proclamation designating November 3, 2002 as Joe Average Day.

Average became a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Artists in 2004 and won its prestigious RCA award. His images have come to symbolize hope to millions of people living with HIV/AIDS.

He has used his considerable talent to help his fellow British Columbians. Over the last 35 years, there has seldom been an HIV/AIDS fundraising event that did not feature at least one Joe Average piece on the auction block.

Average's impact on our gay and straight communities has been enormous. His significant contributions as an artist and philanthropist have been helpful to researchers seeking government and private sector financial support as well as the political will to end the global AIDS epidemic.

In 2019, Average designed the new Canadian loonie, celebrating 50 years of LGBTQ rights in Canada in 2019.

## **Charlotte Brady and Anastasia Castro of Victoria**

Even though they are teenagers, both Charlotte Brady and Anastasia Castro have been involved with environmental issues for many years.

In 2012, the two students joined Fin Free Victoria, an organization focused on educating the public about the plight of world shark populations and the need to regulate the sale of shark fin in Canada.

Brady and Castro have spent many hours collecting signatures and engaging and educating the public on declining shark populations worldwide. Their efforts led to an increased awareness of the issue, including by local restaurant owners, and shark fin is no longer sold in the Victoria area.

In the process, Brady and Castro realised the importance of working with federal politicians to achieve their goals. They had an opportunity to do so during the tabling of the Federal Bill to ban the sale of shark fin in Canada. In June 2019, Canada became the first G20 country in the world to ban the import and export of shark fins.

Along the way, Brady and Castro have taken every opportunity to educate and inspire younger students by giving presentations at schools.

During their Grade 8 year they became aware of and concerned about the issue of ocean plastics. They discussed the issue with their teacher and decided to mount a campaign to ban the use of plastic bags in Victoria.

In 2017 Castro won a Canada-wide Science Fair prize for her project on the Fluctuation of Oceanic Microplastics at Depth and Effects on Marine Ecosystems.

Their efforts to ban plastic bags included making presentations to councils in the Capital Regional District area, speaking at local schools to educate and inspire other students, participating in beach clean-ups, and creating a plan to ban the use of plastic bags in the Victoria area.

Brady and Castro spent a year working with the City of Victoria council to implement their plan and worked to educate the public at local markets, petition signing events and school presentations. The City of Victoria ultimately banned the use of plastic bags in December 2017, and other Capital Regional District municipalities are following.

Brady and Castro are currently developing a program to make all schools in B.C. free of single use plastics.

Throughout the past five years, Brady and Castro have worked and continue to work diligently on their campaigns.

## **John Cameron of Richmond**

John Cameron is a community leader and activist who has devoted the last 40 years of his life to addressing the needs of individuals with AIDS, hepatitis and substance abuse problems.

From 1980 to 1994, while working full-time, he volunteered to help his peers during the emerging AIDS crisis. In 1994 he was diagnosed with full-blown AIDS and was unable to work due to chronic and episodic AIDS-related illnesses, aggravated by a hepatitis B infection incurred in a car accident in 1969.

Cameron is known as a results-oriented renegade. Using logistical and organizational skills, acquired from his engineering and forestry background, he has brought people together to establish AIDS and harm reduction infrastructure and programs.

His endeavours include: co-founding the Downtown Eastside HIV/IDU Consumers' Board (Canada's only entirely peer-operated needle exchange); founding and facilitating the Carnegie AIDS Support Group (which has met weekly for the past 26 years); organizing Canada's largest community-driven World AIDS Day event (ongoing for 26 years); organizing Canada's first (and subsequent) World Hepatitis Day event; spearheading major changes to Vancouver's disabled parking bylaws; organizing and assisting with countless AIDS, hepatitis and harm reduction events, forums and workshops; and sitting on numerous boards and committees.

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In his hometown of Richmond, Cameron was the first person to come out publicly as being gay and having AIDS. He started a local AIDS support group that brought together others infected with and affected by AIDS, which served as a springboard for the establishment of AIDS services in Richmond.

As a recovering alcoholic and someone who resided in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside during his drinking years, Cameron has used his street smarts to assist his peers at the street-level.

His efforts include assisting with paperwork such as income tax, disability, housing and community grant applications, transportation to medical appointments, hospital visitations, feeding people and weekly delivery of Cobs bread to AIDS Vancouver and the Downtown Eastside.

### **Neil Cook of Cranbrook**

Neil Cook has been a driving force in his community of Cranbrook and the East Kootenay. During the 26 years he has lived in Cranbrook he has chosen to volunteer his time with many organizations and projects, all with the goal of helping people and improving his community.

Over the years, Cook has shared his knowledge and experience by serving on the boards of the local Canadian Mental Health Association, the Cranbrook Family Centre, Cranbrook Society for Community Living and the Cranbrook United Way.

Cook was instrumental in founding the Cranbrook and District Community Foundation in 2003. Now known as the Community Foundation of the Kootenay Rockies, this successful organization currently holds \$2.5 million across 37 permanently invested endowment funds, and supports many community services and organizations.

Serving as president and then director of the Community Foundation of the Kootenay Rockies over 17 years, Cook contributed a great deal to the organization's success and its vision of supporting local communities to be better places to live, work and play.

Volunteering much of his time with non-profit organizations, Cook served for seven years as the volunteer Chair of the East Kootenay Homeless Coalition. During this time he has worked tirelessly to build a 24/7 homeless shelter in Cranbrook. That work is ongoing.

Known throughout the community as someone who is kind, inclusive and generous, Cook and his wife Marilynne have welcomed 24 foster children into their hearts and home over the years.

Cook's service work extends to local services clubs. He has been a member of Cranbrook Sunrise Rotary, the Cranbrook Rotary and Kinsmen.

Cook's other volunteer contributions in his community include 22 years of volunteering with the Cranbrook Community Christmas Dinner as a fundraiser and chef, and a ten-year member of the Church Committee at Christ Church Anglican.

With many other interests Cook continues to play a key role in supporting community fundraisers and events from SPCA to the Cranbrook Children's Festival, to the Canadian Cancer Society and Juvenile Diabetes.

### **Bruce Curtis of Courtenay**

Bruce Curtis has been a community leader and volunteer in several fields for over 50 years. Since 1996 he has been a central volunteer and leader of the Community Justice Centre for the Comox Valley. Curtis served on the steering committee that founded the centre, as a volunteer facilitator and, for the past 13 years as its chief administrator.

Over the years, he has inspired and supported volunteers to resolve up to 150 referred cases annually, which provides them opportunities to develop their restorative justice skills.

Curtis has also built important relationships on the Comox Valley's Community Justice Centre's behalf and deepened the application of restorative justice in his community. He has expanded the Community Justice Centre's referral sources, dramatically increasing the impact of restorative justice throughout the community.

Curtis is the originator of the Community Justice Centre's flagship public education venture, the Campagnolo Lectures in Restorative Justice. The lectures attract 300–500 residents each year. Started in 2011, the Campagnolo Lectures have attracted many stellar lecturers, including former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson and Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin.

From 2007–18, Curtis developed and led over 30 Community Justice Centre projects related to combatting racism, hatred and homophobia.

Curtis has provided leadership and voluntary service in water safety/lifesaving, trade unionism, the hospitality sector, humanitarian aid, restorative justice and community-based action around human rights and combatting racism, hatred and homophobia. While the range of issues has been broad, Curtis' dedication has not flagged. The impact of his service work is evident in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

Curtis has written over 90 papers and provincial and national speeches on labour relations, humanitarianism, volunteerism and restorative justice over the past 40 years and was invited to address the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Officers.

Curtis has been recognized for his extraordinary service to his community over the years, including:

- Dr. Liz Elliott Restorative Justice Memorial Award
- Hummingbird Award (Simon Fraser University), Centre for Restorative Justice
- Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Medal
- 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada Medal
- Order of the Red Cross
- Distinguished Service, Canadian Red Cross
- Medal of Recognition, Royal Life Saving Society Commonwealth Council

### **Shirley Gratton of Prince George**

Shirley Gratton's deep pride in her heritage and selfless contributions to her community have contributed greatly to the growth and development of Prince George and the North Central region over the past 70 years.

Gratton's contributions embody the characteristics of good neighbour and citizen. Her interest in helping others, along with a willingness to work for the betterment of families and community, is reflected in the many awards and recognition she has received.

Gratton's connection to Prince George and area goes back to her pioneering parents who settled in Salmon Valley in 1933. A desire to share her talents for the benefits of others, along with a strong interest in her family's heritage, led to her work with the Prince George Heritage Commission where she helped document and ensure the legacy of many historic buildings and sites.

A steadfast champion for heritage promotion, education and awareness, Gratton has dedicated countless hours to develop and promote interpretive signs for local heritage sites and compile an inventory of heritage trees.

Gratton's compilation of recollections and history in *Saga of a Pioneer's Dream*, which tells the stories of settlers to the Salmon Valley region in the early 1900s, has helped create a permanent record of the Cariboo region's vast history. Gratton served on the Prince George City Council for 13 years. She was a founding member and president of the Prince George Fibre Arts Guild, a founding member of the Prince George Sports Hall of Fame, a founding member of the PG Hydro Power Pioneers and a founding member of the Parish Pastoral Council that established Christ Our Saviour Church.

In 2004, Gratton chaired Prince George's Communities in Bloom committee. She is still involved in the Civic Pride Action Group, which conducts an annual litter clean up, as well as the Adopt-a-Block Program where volunteers work to keep the community litter-free.

Gratton's fundraising efforts have helped build a tennis court at Kelly Road Secondary School, the Hart Highlands Ski Hill and the Nechako Babe Ruth Heather Road Complex. She also donated an 18<sup>th</sup> century log loom to the Huble Homestead/Giscome Portage Heritage Society.

Gratton has received the following awards in recognition of her many contributions:

- Mother of the Year from Kelly Road Home & School
- Eagles Mother of the Year
- Inductee to both the BC Babe Ruth Sports Hall of Fame and the Prince George Sports Hall of Fame
- Jeanne Clark Memorial Local History Award
- Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Commemorative Medal
- Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal
- 2004 Citizen of the Year
- 2011 Outstanding Volunteer
- Freedom of the City of Prince George

### **Jack Hutton of Duncan**

Jack Hutton has dedicated 45 years to serving disadvantaged and often marginalized people, while pioneering services for them in the area between Victoria and Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. The lives of thousands of mentally challenged individuals and troubled youth have been improved because of his work in the Cowichan Valley.

Hutton served as the first director of the Duncan Mental Health Centre and had a hand in developing many of the non-profit societies, primarily around youth and mental health support, that have evolved. Hutton's greatest legacy has been the establishment of Providence Farm, which uses horticulture as therapy for those with mental health issues. Under his leadership, the Vancouver Island Providence Community Association has re-built the farm to provide community-based programs for the disadvantaged, including a seniors' program, alternate school, community college classes and a therapeutic riding centre which sends riders to the Special Olympics.

Providence Farm attracts delegate tours from across Canada and Japan, China, Korea and Europe. In 2009 the Sisters of Saint Ann, who had owned the land since 1864, transferred stewardship of the 400-acre parcel of land to the Vancouver Island Providence Community in trust that its mission: to serve disadvantaged and disabled persons, who are not served elsewhere in the community, will continue in perpetuity.

Hutton is now working with a group to develop a village at Providence Farm that will have inclusive, multifaceted housing for an integrated community.

Hutton's contributions to society have been recognized with many awards, including:

- Dr. Phillip Long Cup Award from the Vancouver Mental Health Support Society
- Cowichan Valley Black-Tie Service Award
- City of Duncan Scroll of Honour and the Heritage Days award for his commitment to rescuing and restoring buildings at St. Ann's School and Providence Farm
- Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal
- Rotary Club Service Award for exemplary service
- In 2019 the Vancouver Island Providence Community Association received the B.C. & North region Canada Volunteer Award for Social Innovation

### **Chief M. Jason Louie of Creston**

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Chief Jason Louie was first elected as Chief of the Lower Kootenay Band in 2010. Currently serving his third term as leader of the Ktunaxa people, he is known as a strong leader dedicated to building an economy where his people are self-sufficient, while retaining harmony with Ktunaxa traditions and values.

Born in Creston, Louie has worked collaboratively to build positive relationships with neighbouring communities and the Regional District of Central Kootenay. Through his commitment and persistence, Louie has developed a friendship between the Ktunaxa people and their neighbours.

Louie's welcoming policy invites select individuals to share in the experiences and culture of the Lower Kootenay Band to participate alongside him, his family and the Ktunaxa people—in even the most sacred ceremonies.

For over 30 years, Louie has been involved with the Lower Kootenay Band Annual Pow Wow, one of the few remaining Pow Wows in North America. He also organizes and participates in many Ktunaxa youth initiatives and is passionate about preserving the Ktunaxa language.

Louie is well respected for his openness about his personal struggle with PTSD and depression and is a tireless advocate for mental health awareness. He regularly leads traditional ceremonies for First Nation people living with mental illness and addictions.

Louie is known for his open and respectful dialogue between the Lower Kootenay Band, the Town of Creston, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the RCMP, Canadian and US Border Services and a wide variety of volunteer groups and community service organizations in the Creston Valley.

Louie served his country in the Canadian Armed Forces, Army Reserve, from 2004–2012. In honour of his many contributions and achievements, Louie received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, and in 2013 was a recipient of a British Columbia Community Achievement Award.

Under Louie's leadership the Lower Kootenay Band has made some important acquisitions. In 2015, the Band acquired Ainsworth Hot Springs Resort, bringing traditional lands back into the community and providing local jobs. Through an Incremental Treaty Agreement, the Band has also acquired 475 acres of lakefront property on Kootenay Lake.

Other positive developments under Louie's leadership include a \$1.5 million water system for the Band; construction of a \$1.5 million addition to the Yaqan Nukiy school, over \$300,000 in renovations to Lower Kootenay Band housing units, construction of a traditional Round House in the Ktunaxa community and a farming program to raise and produce beef for community food stores.

Louie has also been a driving force in the development of a health facilities building and an alcohol and drug treatment centre to serve the Lower Kootenay Band.

Above all, Chief Louie is passionate about creating a future in which the Lower Kootenay Band become equal citizens, in a province and country that includes and recognizes First Nations Peoples as autonomous neighbours, within the traditional lands that we all call home.

### **Adrienne Montani of Vancouver**

Adrienne Montani's work over 35 years has focused on women's and children's rights, cross-cultural awareness and racism, and the impacts of social exclusion on children and youth due to poverty and inequality.

Montani has worked in many capacities, from grass-roots community activism in the not-for-profit sector to ensuring adequate resources for the most vulnerable children, as a locally elected school board trustee, to advancing public policy solutions through research and policy.

Since 1976, Montani's advocacy on child poverty, inequality, early childhood development, child care and public education, among other issues, has played an important role in the development of policy and legislation that has improved the quality of life for children and youth in B.C.

Her determination and collaborative leadership has resulted in positive changes to provincial public policy, including support for single parents on social assistance. Recently, the B.C. government announced a new child tax benefit—a measure for which Montani has advanced and organized support over many years.

Montani joined First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition in 2000, she became the Provincial Coordinator in 2005 and has guided its advocacy work ever since.

Under Montani's leadership, the First Call Coalition has grown to over 100 organizational members. Her reasoned and respectful style demands attention to important issues and is always mindful that true beneficiaries of positive change are our children and their families.

Prior to working with First Call, Montani served as the Child and Youth Advocate for the City of Vancouver and as the chair of the Vancouver School Board for three of her six years as an elected school trustee.

Some of her earlier leadership positions included serving as the executive director of Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society for 11 years and as the executive director of Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland for six years. She has also served on the boards of the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, The Society for Children and Youth of BC, and the Canadian Cancer Society BC and Yukon, as well as on the advisory committees of several projects and programs focusing on women and youth.

Over the past decade Montani stewarded the Living Wage for Families Campaign as a First Call hosted project that has now certified dozens of private sector employers and a growing number of municipalities as living wage employers.

For her tireless advocacy for women, children, youth and their families, Montani has received recognition and awards, including:

- The Bill McFarland Award for Excellence in the Advancement of Child Welfare from Parent Support Services Society in 2018
- The Above and Beyond Award from the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks in 2012
- The MOSAIC Human Rights Award in 2010
- The United Way's Excellence in Action for Early Childhood Development Award in 2009
- Federation of Community Social Services' Award of Excellence in 2008

In addition to her work at First Call, Montani currently serves on the board of the Community Legal Assistance Society and the Institute for Public Education BC. She is also a key partner in Campaign 2000, a national anti-child poverty initiative.

### **Dr. Peter Newbery of New Hazelton**

Dr. Peter Newbery is a long-time, much respected physician who serves in the northwestern area of British Columbia.

During his lifetime he has worked with kids at risk on the streets of downtown Toronto, served as a minister and physician for the United Church in small central-coastal communities in B.C., provided management support to five hospitals and eight clinics in rural and isolated communities in B.C., Alberta and Newfoundland, and served as a physician at Wrinch Memorial Hospital in Hazelton.

Through his connection with UBC and the medical school there, Newbery influenced the formation of the University of Northern British Columbia. He subsequently worked with Dr. Charles Jago to establish the Northern Medical Program which now provides doctors, nurses and other health care providers to many northern communities.

Newbery is a man who exemplifies integrity, openness, compassion and creative leadership in a way that has inspired health care workers throughout this province and much of Canada.

For his contributions to society and his community Newbery has already received many awards including:

- The Order of Canada
- The Order of British Columbia
- The Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal
- UBC Faculty of Medicine Golden Jubilee Medal
- Doctor of Divinity from the Vancouver School of Theology

About seven years ago, in the early years of his retirement, Newbery was invited to work with the Upper Skeena community as chair of the fundraising committee for a new, much needed recreation centre.

Newbery accepted the role and was instrumental in raising over \$5 million in community and philanthropic contributions. That resulted in a federal and provincial grant of \$12 million towards the new \$20 million recreation centre.

Thanks to Newbery's tenacity and leadership the centre is now open. It includes a professional-sized indoor ice rink with seating for 500 spectators, a multi-purpose gym, fitness centre, meeting and social areas, and a kitchen.

The Upper Skeena Recreation Centre, also known as the Heart of the Hazelton's, will serve as the region's centre for sport and cultural activities. The facility will provide programs and services for all ages and abilities to address the educational, health and social needs of the surrounding communities.

Newbery's community has nominated him for the 2019 Medal of Good Citizenship as a way of expressing their gratitude, and to pay special tribute for his many contributions that support individuals and families in the Northwest region.

### **Joseph Roberts of the Township of Langley**

As a homeless youth trapped in drug addiction and living on the streets of East Vancouver in the 1980s, Joseph Roberts made two promises: (1) if he was ever able to escape his fate, he would do something to turn his life around, and (2) he would pay it forward.

In 1991 Roberts entered recovery and by 1996 made the Dean's List as an Honour Roll Graduate at Loyalist College in Belleville, Ontario. He graduated with a 3.94 grade point average and earned two business diplomas.

As fate would have it, Roberts became a successful entrepreneur by 2000, and made his first million in sales before he turned 35.

Since his own recovery, Roberts has inspired hundreds and thousands of Canadians with his personal story of transformation. He has written several books including *Don't Buy the Lie About Getting High* (for school students), *Fred the Cat* (a cartoon of Roberts' story) and his best-seller: *7 Secrets to Profit from Adversity*.

Roberts left the corporate world in 2003 to pursue his passion for public speaking. His words have filled people with hope and inspiration: Despite what adversity you find yourself in, you have it within yourself to overcome.

In 2016/17, to pay it forward Roberts pushed a shopping cart across Canada over 17 months in a campaign called The Push for Change. His goal was to raise funds and awareness to prevent youth homelessness.

In preparing for his 17-month walk across Canada, Roberts volunteered for over three years to build the campaign – it was 100% funded by sponsors before the launch.

Roberts walked 24 kilometres per-day for 517 days. During this time, he engaged thousands of Canadians with his personal story and message: Prevention is the key to ending youth homelessness.

The walk raised \$570,000 which was donated to charitable partners like Raising the Roof.

For his achievements and contributions to youth homelessness, Roberts has received many award including:

- The Governor General of Canada's Meritorious Service Medal in 2018
- Senate 150 Anniversary Medal in 2017
- OPP Highest Civilian Honour in 2017
- OPP Honorary Doctorate from Laurentian University in 2016
- Ontario Premier's Award in 2004
- Courage to Come Back Award in 2003

In 2003, Roberts was nominated by Maclean's Magazine as one of 10 Canadians that make a difference. His story was also included in the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario's 150 stories published for Canada's 150 Anniversary. He received *Business in Vancouver's* 40 under 40 in 1999 and *Zoomer Magazine's* 45 over 45 in 2012.

### **Dr. Patricia Roy of Victoria**

Dr. Patricia E. Roy is a pioneering scholar. She has published eight books, three edited volumes and 47 journal articles and book chapters about the history of British Columbia's politics, economy, and the causes and effects of racism encountered by its Chinese and Japanese communities. Roy was among the first scholars to write extensively about Asian immigration to B.C.

During her 40-year career as an educator at the University of Victoria, Roy helped British Columbians better understand themselves and their institutions. She has continued that work in retirement by publishing the biography of Richard McBride, premier 1903-1915, and a commissioned official history of the Royal British Columbia Museum and Archives.

Roy's research and service have been recognized in Japan and by B.C.'s Japanese Canadian and Chinese Canadian communities. Her scholarship has also worked its way into the common knowledge of British Columbians through grade-school textbooks.

Roy's contribution to the province extends beyond her academic career to her remarkable voluntary service in promoting public interest in B.C.'s history. She has served as president of the Victoria Historical Society, is a past president of the Friends of the BC Archives, and is a past president and past honorary president of the BC Historical Federation. Through the University of Victoria Speakers' Bureau, she has given many talks on historical subjects to local seniors' groups and service clubs.

Roy has served on the boards of the Chinese Canadian Historical Association, the Canadian Historical Association, the Organisation for History in Canada, the Canadian Studies Association, and the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

In recognition of her expertise, she has been invited to advise Parks Canada and the Canadian Museum of Civilization. She has served, and continues to serve, on the editorial boards of *BC Studies*, and *Historical Studies*, a publication of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association.

Roy has improved our understanding of B.C.'s past and continues to contribute to the understanding of modern B.C. through her scholarship, teaching and service.

### **Patricia Shields of Vancouver**

Patricia Shields is a former teacher and principal who is well-respected in the education community for her leadership in advancing public education and pioneering innovative programs that benefit children within and beyond the school system.

In her 30-year career with the Vancouver School Board, Shields went above and beyond to develop various education programs within the public-school system and for the community at large.

Shields is known for implementing Welcome to Kindergarten™, a provincewide program designed to support the transition of families into the public-school system. This program engages children, parents, caregivers, school staff and communities, and equips parents with resources to make early learning a priority at home. The program has touched 22,000 vulnerable families in British Columbia.

Shields has also shown her deep commitment to children through her work with various non-profit organizations. She set up the YMCA's Education Advisory Committee and was involved in the creation of their after-school programs: Welcome to My Life and Boys 4 Real.

Shields currently serves as the chair of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra Education Advisory Committee. She chaired the committee to establish the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra School of Music and recently timed off that Board. She served on the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra for several terms and assisted in developing VSO Connects, an elementary and secondary school-based program involving the Maestro, UBC music students and members of the orchestra.

She was the driving force behind the Vancouver Opera Society's Music! Words! Opera! an education program available to lower mainland school districts. Shields is also a member of Telus Vancouver Community Board's education sub-committee which supports youth through grants to local charities.

For the past 20 years Shields has been a champion of Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland. She created the group's Education Advisory Committee and co-developed their Study Buddy program which helps at-risk youth from low-income households receive the tutoring support they need to excel in school and beyond.

Since its inception in 2002, Study Buddy has served over 2000 at-risk youth, and continues to benefit many more. Some participants have reported they would not have gone on to apply for post-secondary education without the confidence and skills they gained through the support of their Study Buddy.

Shields' vision, commitment and dedication to the well-being of children has enriched the lives of countless at-risk youth, their families and communities. She continues to contribute to the Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland chapter as an Honorary Advisory Committee member.

Shields is passionate about the well-being of children and making sure they have every opportunity to succeed in school. Without her leadership, commitment and passion to bettering the lives of youth through education, many at-risk children would lack the opportunity to overcome their struggles.

### **Tom Smithwick of Kelowna**

Tom Smithwick is a retired lawyer living in Kelowna. Throughout his life, Smithwick has demonstrated concern, compassion and leadership to those who need emotional, financial and often physical support to thrive in society.

Smithwick's philosophy has been: There is always a way to get things done, a way to raise money and a way to help people. In the face of adversity, and often when others gave up, Smithwick has persevered and succeeded—always to the benefit of his fellow citizens.

The creation of The Resurrection Recovery Resource Society is a reflection of Smithwick's determination to provide housing, counselling and support for men suffering from addiction and other mental health issues.

Now known as Freedom's Door, this organization owns the largest group of recovery homes in B.C. Currently it can provide services for 67 men in seven purchased duplex homes. Many of these men have come from life on the streets or jail.

Since retiring from his legal practice Smithwick volunteers at Freedom's Door and oversees fundraising and public relations for the organization, which offers free treatment. He continues to be a mentor to the residents; through counselling and support many go on to become contributing members of society.

In 1981, as founder and chairman of the Kelowna Boat People Refugee Committee Smithwick was instrumental in bringing the highest per-capita number of refugees in Canada to Kelowna. The personal success of many refugees and their families is directly related to Smithwick's leadership and compassion.

Smithwick was also a founding director of the Kelowna Terminally ill Children's Holiday Society. This organization was eventually replaced with the Make-A-Wish Organization, which continues in the area.

Over the years Smithwick has worked tirelessly to build relationships within the community through founding, participating in or raising funds for many community organizations.

Smithwick was a director and fundraiser of the Mission Creek Greenway project which raised money for improvements to the public walkways along Mission Creek. He was also a founding member of the Share Depot, a community resource selling used goods at a low price for community members who require assistance.

Smithwick's top priority has always been the welfare of others. Over the years he has received many awards in recognition of his service work, including:

- Caring Canadian Award by the Governor General of Canada in 2005
- Kelowna Man of the Year Award in 2000
- 125 Anniversary Medal by the Governor General of Canada in 1992

### **Louis Thomas of Salmon Arm**

Louis Thomas is a Secwepemc Knowledge-Keeper from the Neskonlith First Nation. He has been walking a path of reconciliation, relationship building and teaching in the Shuswap for over 40 years.

Thomas' compassionate nature has been the bridge to help span Indigenous and settler culture groups in his community. His determination to share Secwepemc knowledge and culture with children throughout the region has helped shape school curriculum, art gallery exhibitions, library programs and writers festivals.

The son of Dr. Mary Thomas, the famed Neskonlith elder and ethnobotanist, Thomas continues his mother's legacy by staying involved with all aspects of life in the Shuswap region. His efforts to preserve traditional Secwepemc food plants were the centerpiece of a recent exhibition exploring food sovereignty, security and sustainability.

As a community leader Thomas believes that all facets of community: housing, safe walking routes, food security, community building, restoration of the Salmon River delta, respect for the land and economic improvement are all connected. He works to cross-reference his efforts in each of these areas with groups who might be focused on only one thing.

Thomas is also a relationship builder. By targeting positive leaders and teaching through story, traditional knowledge, humour, persistence and gentle persuasion, he has created legacy organizations that are changing minds and relationships in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities of the Shuswap.

Thomas was one of the trail stewards in a Salmon Arm Arts Centre exhibition and trail exploration project from 2014 to 2016. His impact was immense. He became a leader and helped the Arts Centre navigate the project with a respect for traditional wisdom, language, and story-telling.

Thomas has also founded several other local organizations, including the Salmon River Watershed Council, the Switzmalph Cultural Society, the Shuswap Trail Alliance and the Shuswap Regional Trails Roundtable. He continues to help advance the national mandate to reconcile Indigenous and settler culture relations.

His work to support basic nutrition of his people includes outings to traditional food harvesting areas. These trips always include two or three people of Indigenous or non-Indigenous heritage, to whom he will impart his incredible knowledge of the land and its gifts.

Thomas strives to ensure this knowledge will continue to be passed down throughout the generations.

### **Vivian Tsang of Vancouver**

Vivian Tsang is a medical student at the University of British Columbia, where she is recognized as a National Schulich Scholar, and Major Entrance Scholarship winner. The impetus for her medical pursuits is her vision for the future of healthcare: one that is inclusive and accessible to all Canadians, no matter their past or current circumstances.

To bring this to reality, Tsang is dedicating her life to improving healthcare accessibility and reducing social inequalities for vulnerable population groups.

She founded and serves as the Director of The Humanitarian Organization for Providing Empowerment (HOPE) Initiative Foundation, a non-profit organization that empowers students to work alongside marginalized local and international community groups through mutual aid and interpersonal humanitarianism.

Tsang dedicates her time to organizing various events for Vancouver's homeless community and has created Warmth of Winter Portfolios to highlight the perspectives of clients in various stages of homelessness. She also organizes the HOPE for Success program in the Lower Mainland which annually helps over 3,000 students with their transition into post-secondary education. Tsang also serves as a peer academic coach initiating city-wide workshops for girls coming from inner-city schools.

For her work, Tsang has been awarded the City of Vancouver's Award of Excellence, UBC's Premier and Wesbrook Scholarship, and was nominated as a YWCA Young Woman of Distinction.

Vivian is also heavily involved in pediatric patient advocacy through her positions as National Director of the National KidsCan Initiative and on the Board of Directors on the International Children's Advisory Network—an advisory group that collaborates with researchers and clinicians around the world to improve pediatric research.

Since starting medical school, Vivian has taken the lead as Co-Chair of the Medical Undergraduate Society's Political Development Committee and recently represented the Faculty of Medicine in advocating for improved youth mental health with the Minister of Health in B.C. Along with her role on Vancouver City Council's Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee, Tsang is working on advocating for improvements to mental health resources for B.C. youth.

Between her years in medical school, Tsang worked in South Africa and Zimbabwe to learn about HIV/AIDS infection prevention for populations living in low-resource settings. She supplemented this field work with an internship in Switzerland at the World Health Organization working in Tropical Diseases Research to implement tuberculosis protocols in Zambia.

With any spare time, she loves mentoring the next generation of leaders. In particular, she serves as a mentor with UBC Women in Science Club, and with the YWCA in Vancouver out of her passion for the empowerment of young women in pursuit of science.

### **Michelle Renee Wilson of Delta**

Since her eldest child Tru, came out as transgender at the age of nine, Michelle Renee Wilson has been an avid advocate for trans rights and a champion for queer kids.

When Tru's school refused to accommodate or support her transition, Ms. Wilson and her family filed a human rights complaint against the school, and the Catholic Independent Schools of the Vancouver Archdiocese, for not supporting her gender identity.

In response, and after two years of mediation, in 2014 the Catholic School Board became one of the first in North America to develop a policy to support gender expression. It paved the way for other denomination-based independent schools in B.C. and across Canada to create such policies.

This opened the door to learning environments that are more inclusive to diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. It also happened before the B.C. government required public schools and districts to have such policies.

Since then, Wilson spends countless volunteer hours speaking at conferences and supporting other families going through their own struggles.

She has provided numerous interviews on TV and radio, and been asked to speak at events and fundraisers in support of SOGI 1 2 3 and Out In Schools, gender conferences such as Gender Odyssey in Seattle and Proud2Be in Vancouver, teacher training sessions at UBC, and social events such as Grace Club where she shares her story of love and acceptance, reinforcing the importance of supporting queer kids.

Wilson is a board member of G\_Day for Girls and Out On Screen. At every chance she encourages young people to be who they are, and parents to simply love and accept their kids and teaches them all that by spreading acceptance and love we can make the world better.

By setting a path toward acceptance, Wilson has been a force for the rights of transgender youth and their families.