



Shelley Clarkson

(1952 -)

Shelley Clarkson was born in Abbotsford, BC on December 11, 1952 to Donald and May Edith Clarkson. As a child, she loved to read, especially about horses, and dreamed about becoming a writer, a bookstore owner or a librarian.

Encouraged by her mother, Shelley went to work for the Fraser Valley Regional Library at the age of 17. Her first job was to process about 5,000 paperbacks. In the years that followed, she enjoyed working in the request department, driving the delivery truck, manning the bookmobile, and acting as the first assistant at the Mission Library. In 1981, when the previous Community Librarian retired, Shelley was selected as her replacement. Her daughter Joslin was born shortly after on February 28, 1984.

During her time as Community Librarian, Shelley spent 12 years fighting for the construction of a new library in Mission that opened in February 1993. Heather Hannah, one of her co-workers, explained that "Shelley was a major force in getting the new library built in the midst of strong opposition." She worked not only to get it constructed, but to ensure that the architectural design would draw in members of the community.

Looking back on her career, Shelley is particularly proud of her vision to bring public art into the Regional Library. Working with the Mission Arts Council, she spearheaded the "Our Elders are Watching" paintings, which provide a tribute to the past and present aboriginal elders in the community. Upon her retirement in 2008, Shelley became the chair of the Mission Friends of the Library, where she volunteers her time and energy to raise funds for the enhancement of the library.

Shelley's appointment as Community Librarian was also a turning point for her involvement in the community, as her support was enlisted for various initiatives. One opportunity led to another and, before she knew it, she had made significant contributions to the community. One of the first projects that she became involved in was the preservation of Fraser River Heritage Park. Shelley worked with the Heritage Association for 18 years. Once the park was established, she assisted with the organization of twilight concerts, the reconstruction of the Grotto and the Mission Folk Music Festival.

In 1998, upset by the lack of options for students who wanted to pursue trades, Shelley decided to run for School Board Trustee. She felt that it was important for high schools in Mission to open up more options for students who chose not to attend university. She pushed for an apprenticeship program that could prepare students to go to work straight after high school. During her nine years as School Trustee, Shelley was humbled by the terrific students she was exposed to and the impact she was able to have on young lives. "At every graduation ceremony, you would look over a sea of young faces and a stage full of students and know that these people were all affected in some way by something that the school district was doing," she explained.

While the Mission Community Librarian and a School Board Trustee, Shelley joined the board of the Mission Foundation, serving as co-chair and chair of the scholarship selection committee. In 2009, after ten years of involvement, she was appointed chair of the Foundation. Shelley has also contributed to the work of the Mission Horse Club, the Mission Optimist Club and the Morning Rotary Club.

As a tireless volunteer deeply connected to her community, Shelley continues to devote hours of her time to the betterment of Mission each week. In the coming years, she also hopes to travel around the world, to take trips on her boat, to write children's books and to spend time with her daughter. Shelley would like to be remembered as "a person who stepped up to support the community."

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