



# Bonnie Harber

(1945 - )

Bonnie Harber was born April 5th, 1945 in Montreal Quebec to William Richard and Dorothy Hamilton. The eldest of her two siblings, Linda and Michael, she looked up to her mother who was a stay at home mom and influential in her upbringing, imparting the values of honesty and hard work. Looking back at her childhood Bonnie can only describe it as idyllic.

At age 13 Bonnie met Kenneth John Harber whom she married in 1963 at age 17, undeterred by the concerns of both families about how young they were and had two children, Kim and Robert. They proved their parents worries unfounded, remaining married until Ken's death in 1995.

After seeing an ad in the newspaper for a house that read "If you like Cedar and windows, this house is for you," Bonnie and her family moved to Steelhead in 1974. Once settled in their new home, Bonnie fell in love with the community.

She joined the Steelhead Community Association and quickly became an integral, beloved member of the group, always being "the first one to put up her hand when there was work to be done." Among her countless contributions was her unwavering involvement with the decade long construction of the present day Steelhead Community Hall. She fondly recalls being dubbed the "Queen Worker Bee," helping to feed the volunteers or directing the work herself. Due to her extraordinary dedication to her community, Bonnie received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the City of Mission in 2018.

In 1980, Ken's health suddenly declined, making it impossible for him to work and in need of extensive medical care. Faced with supporting her family and caring for her husband, Bonnie was offered a job to foster parent. While it started off as a job that allowed her to work at home while caring for her husband, fostering quickly became a passion.

She welcomed hundreds of vulnerable and at risk children into her home over the decades, advocating for them while providing a stable, loving, and nurturing environment. Bonnie became especially bonded with two of the children she cared for, Donovan and Nicole, who are now members of her family "through osmosis." In an effort to improve conditions for foster children and caregivers, Bonnie also became involved with the Mission Branch and Regional Council of the BC Foster Parents Association, serving on their boards and enlisting new families into the fostering community.

At present, Bonnie is focusing on and enjoying her growing family that includes 4 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren and another on the way. A foster parent for 44 years, Bonnie is currently offering respite care to her last case.

As for the future - she's taking each day as it comes and appreciating being able to spoil children who go home each night. When reflecting on her accomplishments, she said she was proud of "doing whatever she had to do, and not being afraid to speak [her] mind."

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