

The Thetis Island  
**Quarterly** Special  
Edition



**Veronica Shelford**  
**1947 ~ 2025**



## Veronica Margaret Hess

Veronica was born in West Vancouver on October 14, 1947. While still an infant her family moved to the Town of Mount Royal, a suburb of Montreal. She attended Mount Royal High and went on to graduate with a BA in philosophy and honours English in 1969 from McGill University.

She married Graeme Shelford on May 24, 1969. A year later, the couple moved to Ile Perrot 30 miles from Montreal. Posted overseas for Graeme's business, Veronica spent her time designing a Habitat-style house, which, on returning, they built themselves without a contractor on the waterfront of Lac St Louis. Veronica also worked for Concordia University vetting student teachers.

In 1979, the couple moved to Richmond BC where they converted a typical Richmond bungalow to an attractive West Coast-style house. Veronica took up pottery, selling many pieces and became a respected potter in the Richmond Pottery Club.

In 1988, the couple bought land on Thetis Island and later visited it by boat nearly every weekend. Once again, Veronica designed a house that fitted in with the land. Michel Poirier began construction in 1995 and the couple moved in during the famous snowstorm of Christmas 1996. Veronica joined the volunteers supporting the Thetis Island Quarterly in 1997 and was editor from 1998 until her death.

She loved design, and in addition to designing her own house, she designed her brother and sister-in-law's house at 165 Pilkey Point Road and an investment house that Graeme built at 187 Pilkey Point Road.

Veronica was an active member of the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department from 2000 to 2001, but finding its demands beyond her physical strength, joined the Rest and Rehab Auxiliary supporting the TIVFD, later taking on the additional role of supporting the chief with computer work, including the TIVFD website and online burn permits applications.

Veronica was very active in the community serving on the boards of both TICA and TIRRA. She developed and published the informative Thetis Island phone book, the visitors' guide, websites for the TIVFD, TIID, TIVFS, and the community information website [thetisland.net](http://thetisland.net).

Many Thetis Islanders were introduced to Thetis by staying at the Cufra Cliffs B&B which she and Graeme opened in 2002.

Clearly Veronica loved the Thetis Island community and the community reflected that love back to her in many ways.

Veronica died of cancer at Cowichan District

hospital on August 12, 2025. She is survived by her husband Graeme, brother Matthew Hess, sister-in-law Claire Hess, nephews Jeffrey, Michael, Stephen Hess and Carl Dashfield, and nieces Karen and Barbara Dashfield.



## The Thetis Island Community Remembers Veronica Shelford

We live on Thetis Island because Veronica and Graeme (V&G) had already found it and loved it.

We were attracted to our lot on Thetis both by the view and its proximity to V&G's lot. When we moved here in 2005, V&G had a rental property ready for us to occupy, while we planned our new home.

Veronica agreed to work with us on designing our new home. The design that she produced is the home we now enjoy.

As I became involved in Community organizations, I was struck by how often Veronica would listen to various opinions at meetings and would come forward with constructive suggestions that respected the various concerns.

Veronica's representation of our ferry schedule is truly ingenious. At a glance you can see for any time of day where the ferry should be and in which direction it should be going. Like many inventions, once you see it, it seems obvious.

Having Veronica as a close neighbour and dependable family member has been taken for granted until very recently. In Veronica's precious final hours, we were able to share memories of love and gratitude highlighted by the 20 years we enjoyed together on Thetis Island.

Matt Hess



January '97 we had moved to the Island weeks later than planned due to the big storm of '96. A few days later I was invited to 'Ladies Night' at Forbes Hall, my first Island event at which I sat next to a very friendly and welcoming Veronica who informed me with much laughter that this was not a 'Ladies Night' that had male dancers it was a much more decorous affair!

From that night on we became very good friends, both interested in the arts and photography in particular. We took many walks with our cameras and our dogs, getting to know the Island trails and each other.

I don't remember exactly when we got together with the Quarterly but I do remember us looking at a photocopied and stapled Q and thinking, heck we could do better than that, and with her expertise we did. She patiently taught me to use the programs needed and was always at the end of the phone if I had any problems with it, which

happened fairly frequently.

I have met very few people in my life as willing to step up and take on projects to help with and improve the lives of community members as Veronica was. You will see as you read this special issue Veronica meant many things to many people and above all she absolutely loved this Island and this community.

So we have to carry on without her; it's taken four people to cover all the things Veronica did for us and I know that she was thrilled that others would carry on the work.

So thank you Veronica for your no-nonsense friendship, your wonderfully open heart and your quirky sense of humour, I miss you very much,

Carol Sowerby



### Veronica

A long-time fond friend to me personally and a fellow artist, theatre enthusiast, contributor of all her talents, and boasting a myriad of skills at the drop of a hat. She was always a particularly ardent supporter of the Quarterly! She was an inspiration with her finger in every pie and always on the Island pulse! So, this special edition is particularly an appropriate vehicle to honor and celebrate Veronica.

### Veronica

A true Thetis Islander- with her ever ready smile, her responsive laugh, and her eagerness to contribute in more ways than I can count! Every committee, every Community event, every meeting to organize, to sit with a group and crochet or just to chat...

### Veronica

It might take her a while, given her out-dated technology, struggles with her eyesight, and in spite of her countless challenges she delivered, and delivered, and delivered.

### Veronica

Dependably generous, quick witted, and ready to respond to anyone, any time, and to every need. Ready to take care of feeding the whole island if necessary!

### Veronica,

if Thetis Island had a Mount Rushmore, Veronica's face would be there, ever vigilant, guarding her precious Island home.

Mary Forbes



I first met Veronica by accident, as they say, in about 1998 or '99 when the TIVFD responded to the Shelfords' half-finished house on Moore Hill for a table saw incident. This tall, imposing, and seemingly unflappable woman from thence onwards became a huge supporter of the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department and my great friend.

In fact, Veronica supported the TIVFD so much that she decided to volunteer and was enrolled in our ranks in January 2001. Veronica pulled hose, climbed ladders, wore the heavy SCBA (the tanks were not fibreglass back then), and trained with the rest of us, despite her fire turn-out pants and jacket being designed to fit a shorter stature.

Veronica retired from the fire department the following year to take up Auxiliary FD roles in Rest & Rehab, Emergency Scene Traffic Control, and Base Station Operator. She also took on the mundane but extremely necessary jobs as fire department website administrator, the Fire Permit administrator, the TIVFD-sponsored 'Flu Shot Clinic registrar, annual photo inserts into Cowichan Valley newspapers for Fire Safety Week spreads (she even flawlessly photoshopped missing members into the picture) and a myriad of other communications duties over the years that the Fire Chief threw at her. She caught every request with commitment and finesse.

She did all this whilst designing a home for her brother and sister in law, Matt and Claire, taking part in philosophy meetings, TIRRA meetings, TICA meetings, making beautiful pottery, editing The Quarterly newsletter, publishing the Visitors Guide, compiling the TI Phone Book every two years, gardening veggies, rescuing cats, dog-walking, and running a B&B with Graeme.

She had travel adventures to far-away from Thetis lands with Graeme and Matt & Claire, and many boat adventures because inevitably their boating sojourns resulted in drifting whilst repairs were made.

In other words, Veronica jumped in, joined in, and kept her life interesting and full until her final day. Her droll sense of humour, despite the cruelty of her illness, was with her to the end. Our late Marge Armstrong sums up one of Veronica's many contributions to Thetis Island life best in her Acknowledgements page of Marge's book *A History of the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department* (2007, cover images by Veronica Shelford): "A very busy Veronica Shelford said she'd proof-read for me. She took my loose-leaf style history and made it into this beautiful book, including collecting (and occasionally taking) the photographs. Everything you see in this book, her hand has touched. Veronica, I am most grateful for your expertise,

guidance, and time. You too, were there for me and I treasure our friendship."

I too, treasure my friendship with Veronica and thank her for her many kindnesses, support and compassion over the quarter of a century I was honoured to know her.

*Jeannine Caldbeck*



Veronica was one of the most supportive people I've known. She'd turn up, not only for the event itself, but to show support of those who volunteered for the event. Serving her at different events, she made me feel like I had cooked simply for her to enjoy, and that leaves a lasting impression. She supported small businesses, artists, artisans and farms on the island, she'd show up to school events and other performances, always with open gratitude for efforts and products.

She probably would never suggest that she led by example, but her example of what one person can do for a community I am sure led others to pitch in. When she joined a Board or a committee, it was because she cared. Thetis was changed by her work, linking us all with a website, making sure we could contact each other easily via the Thetis Phone Book, and all the other gaps in our connectivity that she effectively filled to help us live as a community. As we navigate the waters without her at our side, she is still there as a needle on our compass, reminding us to care and to give.

*Ann Dickie*



While I have many wonderful and positive memories of Veronica over the years, the most significant of those center around our interactions involving the Quarterly. During the last ten years or so, she has been the recipient of my regular contributions that focus on marine life and its relationships/impacts on Thetis Island. Her enthusiast interest and encouragement were central to a regular "series" that appeared. It made the effort to produce something for each issue and stay focused and consistent. And of course, her co-editor Carol Sowerby ably shared the load with her complimentary skills and abilities.

In recent years, Veronica realized that her indispensable role with the Quarterly, like all good things, "must come to an end". And in several past issues, her and Carol attempted to find someone to carry on with this iconic and unique Thetis Island publication.





Auxiliary work

In appreciation for her diligence, I encourage someone with an appropriate skill set and interest to step forward to ensure the Quarterly lives on. I am certain Veronica would rest contentedly at such news. In my role as a consistent contributor, I remain ready and able to carry on.

*Andy Lamb*

Note: Help has been found ~ the Quarterly will continue!



I believe it is nearly 30 years since Veronica had been living and volunteering on Thetis Island. Early on she took on the Quarterly which at the time was just a newsletter, and she turned it into the publication we have today. She then took on the phone book which at the time was just that. She turned this basic phone book into the valuable resource that we all refer to on a regular basis. She then took it upon herself to create the Thetis Island Visitors' Guide which has benefited both

businesses on the island and visitors alike. As well as this she has supported and worked with the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department. eg. if you needed a burn permit it was Veronica who issued it. And when there was any community function you could guarantee that Veronica would always be there to help and be in attendance. Veronica loved Thetis Island and its community and she totally gave of herself to make this a better place for all of us, even though at times her health was a challenge for her. Veronica was smart as well as having that all too uncommon gift of 'common sense'. She was a incredibly giving individual. Veronica will be missed for many years to come. Veronica you are a Star. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Rest in Peace.

*Pauline Harwood and Alex Rosewicz*







The Woolgatherers

There are so many ways Veronica's life intersected with mine while I was on Thetis, but the times I remember most were planning and then rolling out the annual Thetis Island Woolgathering.

It began as a gathering of rug braiders organized by Beth Bolster and over the years became known as the "Woolgathering", an annual event for rug braiders and rug hookers to come together and share creativity, wonderful food, and most importantly, lasting friendships. When Beth Bolster left Thetis, it fell to Veronica, Claire Hess, Mary Forbes and me to



Veronica, Claire and Jane at the Woolgatherers



organize the Woolgathering. We were a great team. Veronica's involvement was instrumental in the ongoing success of the event. She was our registrar and treasurer but took on various other functions as needed. For years she and Graeme housed various participants each year in their B&B and became fast friends with many. Veronica was intrepid and unstoppable! No matter what, she was someone who could always be counted on to help out, with intelligence and a kind and generous spirit.

*Jane LeBaron*



Veronica was most familiar to us, through her association with The Woolgatherers, a group of women who met to work and learn about Fabric Art. Veronica was one of the organizers for this Annual event that met at Overbury Farm Resort for many years. She was one of those people who always had considered and positive thoughts to offer in our conversations. Veronica had a golf cart that she used to walk her dog on her hilly neighbourhood roads that she had trouble manoeuvring with her mo-

bility issues. Once a year she would drive her golf cart halfway across the Island to be used at the Woolgatherers meeting to assist those ladies with getting to and from the cabins, dining room and Pavilion. We ended up buying the golf cart from her and it became a huge success at Overbury and lasted many years. We will remember Veronica with affection every time we drive our new Golf cart.

*Arlene and Norm Kasting*



I still can't believe that Veronica is gone. She has always been there. Whether taking on the Quarterly or making flyers for Summer Visitors it was done and done well. I have known Veronica for over 30 years. She was smart, kind, an animal lover and a person that always cared about issues on the island. Veronica, you

can sleep now, everything you did for this island, we thank you. It is not going to be easy to fill them but maybe you will sit on our shoulders and give us a hand. Join Penn for a walk near the sea. He will love that. I will miss you.

*Gloria Taylor*

Veronica was one of Thetis Island's gems. I appreciated her faithful hard work on our wonderful Quarterly publications and her attention to detail for our essential Thetis phone book. Both were massive jobs that she did with excellence!

My first memory of Graeme and Veronica was in our early years on Thetis around 1989. Ernie and I had to fly from Vancouver, where the Shelfords were still living part-time, to Dallas, Texas for the beginning of many craniofacial surgeries with our 6-year-old daughter, Tricia. We had met them but did not know them well at the time yet they invited us to come for dinner and stay overnight with them before beginning our journey. As our after-dinner conversation began, Veronica suggested that Tricia would have more fun learning a CAD program for designing houses! She confidently said, "She'll get it!" Veronica returned after giving a brief demo and Tricia stayed happily engaged on the computer until bedtime. I appreciated Veronica's sensitivity and thoughtfulness in giving Tricia something new and challenging to do while the adults chatted. I can still picture the beautiful and delicious Creme Brûlée that she served as well!

Veronica's servant heart and dedication to our community will be greatly missed and lovingly treasured.

Lynn Hunter



In my experience Veronica was always positive about her challenges in life which has been and continues to be a quiet yet powerful encouragement to me. Her ready smile and warm greeting for me and so many others provided strong leadership by being a living example of community connection. Physical limitations did not stop her, rather she doubled down on what she could do and WOW, don't we all know and appreciate her multifaceted community involvement behind the scenes facilitating our safety and connections. She did all this by personally phoning, emailing or chatted with each of us at Soup's On, in the library or on the ferry to be sure our personal information was as we wanted it.

She lived out her commitment to creating our loving community by supporting all of us in every way she could. Thank you, Veronica.

Sue French



### *Veronica Sundays at the Library*

Always the calming presence  
The accepting eyes  
The soft inviting voice  
"What are you reading?  
You might want to try  
Michael Hudson or Howard Zinn.  
They posit a history  
of how we arrived  
At this present moment  
Of the past  
That has a power  
To turn one's  
Head around.  
Oh...and the readings  
Go very well  
With Claire's Blondie Squares."  
Sampling the squares  
Later the readings  
She opens once again  
A new place  
From where taste  
And ideas emerge  
Fresh and alive.  
Sunday afternoons  
Made special  
By tea and squares  
And books and words  
And, always her calming presence  
always her calming presence.  
Thanks Veronica.

Ken Redman.



When I became the TICA librarian at the Book and Bake Sale in 2013, Veronica was selling books. She continued to sell books for many more years of Book and Bake Sales. Veronica was a Friend of the Library well before my role as librarian. I am thinking she was likely instrumental in setting up the program.

When Veronica and Claire were on the traditional Sunday roster for Tea and Treats, patrons could count on rooibos tea, yummy treats and interesting conversation. The WW2 veterans made it a weekly excursion to exchange stories and have a sweet.

I sure appreciate Veronica's tremendous support for our island library and shall miss her generous presence in the community.

Celine Valestrand



A selfless individual is the very fabric of Community.

The person who sees a need and takes the steps to quietly resolve. The person who collects viewpoints and works tirelessly to put those collaborations into action.

Veronica, the sheer definition of a selfless individual. So many initiatives Thetis residents rely on regarding information and communication, were created, solved or envisioned by Veronica. When I first became a full-time resident, I was oblivious to all the organizations and committees, services and programs contributing to our island life. I lived in my happy oblivion until 2018, when I became President of TIRRA (Thetis Island Residents' and Ratepayers'). I was immediately aware how seamlessly Veronica was integrated into our island life. Whether directly supporting organizations (TIVFD), making things happen (Ferry Webcam, Quarterly, Visitor's Guide), or keeping us all informed (thetisland.net), she was the very thread that held us together.

Veronica was an action taker and a volunteer extra-ordinaire. She was a participant: at all public agendas and community gatherings. Simply put, the world needs more Veronica's. She will be missed by friends, family, acquaintances and of course, by this Community she cherished.

*Wendy Hinsperger*



I remember the first time I sat and had an in-depth conversation with Veronica. It was not long after we had retired on Thetis 16 years ago. She was curious about my studio practise and so I invited her to drop by. What ensued was a rich conversation that ranged from politics to art to spirituality.

As both of us deepened our engagement in community service sadly and with regret those meetings of mind became few and far between. I always left any conversations with her thinking a bit more broadly about whatever the subject was. At many a community meeting her piercingly curious and straightforward observations always had an impact on me.

And there was laughter. In my experience she brought with her a way of holding life lightly and generously. That combined with her intelligence and wit made for a beautiful encounter.

You shall be missed.

Thank you Veronica.

*Suzanne Sarioglu*

In our relatively short time as residents on Thetis Island, we got to know Veronica Shelford as a neighbour and board member of TIRRA.

Veronica was generous with her time and knowledge. Whether consulting about the Thetis Island phone book, membership lists or community website listings, Veronica was always willing to share her knowledge, expertise and suggestions. Her love for Thetis Island and its community was deeply evident.

Her passion for projects such as The Quarterly was immense. Interconnecting the community and its members was a common thread that wove through many of these projects. She will be so greatly missed and remembered.

*Susan and Karl Unger*



Shortly before Veronica passed away, we were all enjoying an ice cream at the marina. Veronica was asked how she was feeling, with effortless grace she briefly answered and went on to thank the owners for their positive contribution to Thetis. Silently, I thought, once again Veronica showed that kindness is the best currency of life. Similarly, I am sure we can all think of numerous instances where her outlook on life turned challenges into opportunities. Veronica lived with unwavering dedication. She listened without judgement.

Her legacy of strength and kindness will inspire us every day.

*Joan Smirl*



I just want to acknowledge Veronica's work as editor of the Thetis Island Quarterly. For a small community such as Thetis, it presents a wonderful assortment of news and people for which my wife and I regard highly. My wife was an editor herself, so she understood the amount of behind-the-scenes effort involved.

Thank you.

*Garry Wickett*







She was always a welcoming and helpful person to me and my family over the years. Sharing a photo of her having fun, on the TIVFD Auxiliary float in the parade, August 1, 2021. Great to see her with such a natural smile.

*Gregg Humphries*



Keith and I first met Graeme and Veronica in 1988, their first year on Thetis. They travelled by boat to and from Richmond in those days. They loved to swim and sunbathe and so we often would see them enjoying themselves at the pool, shower and sauna. We learned that Veronica made beautiful pottery, delicious bread and took many photos of Thetis. Veronica was one of those people who early on was very capable with her computer and she created giclee prints and posters from her photographs.

Veronica loved Thetis Island and it showed – she participated, organized, created and launched many initiatives. One of Veronica's initiatives stands out, and that was her creation of the Thetis Island phone book.

This was an enormous undertaking and Veronica tackled it like everything else she did.

She created an invaluable resource for our community. The phone book has maps, different ways to look up peoples address, lot number and phone number. The phone book also has the ferry schedule on the back for quick and easy reference when you are in the car.

The schedule as shown on the phone book is a unique display and not one that is found on the Ferries website. During the many reworking of the schedule over the years, Veronica would take what BC Ferries suggested and format it in the sensible easy readable method (snake method) that we are all familiar with. More often than not Veronica would pick up errors in the crossing times, much to the embarrassment of BC Ferries scheduling teams.

*Ellen and Keith Rush*





Veronica and Penn