



Respect Works Here

Community Champion

Meeting **Janice (Ouchi) Buick**, one is immediately struck by her liveliness and enthusiasm and it is easy to see how she has made a positive impact on her community for so many years.

Active, energetic and highly organized, Janice has focused on giving back to her community for so many years without looking for accolades, but she feels incredibly honored and is 'tickled pink' to have been nominated as a Community Champion.

For Janice, her foray into volunteering began with her quest to discover and learn more about her own culture. In 1901, her grandfather came to Canada from Japan with his brother and sister and established themselves in Vernon.

"We've always been farmers and orchardists and if you ever bought tomatoes or green peppers on Bella Vista road, you likely bought them from my grandfather, uncle or cousin," says Janice proudly.

Janice grew up learning odori (Japanese dance) and eating Japanese food, but had to learn the language and other traditions on her own.

"My parents were interned when they were quite young and they were pushed to fit in. That's where we lost our culture, our language," she explains. "I think it's really sad when you lose your culture. I grew up very Canadian – to the point that I didn't even realize that I was Japanese. I reconnected with the culture when I ran for Queen Silver Star.

I wanted to showcase my Japanese heritage through dance and it ignited a real passion in me to keep going."

Janice has been volunteering with the Vernon Japanese Cultural Society (VJCS) since 2000, serving on the Executive since 2004 and producing the newsletter for 13 years. She has often represented the organization at the Nations Association of Japanese Canadians Representatives and her passion to celebrate people's cultures and diversity has been stoked through this.

"I've been very fortunate. I have met many people from the Japanese community right across Canada and heard the stories, especially about internment," she says. "It's really hard for people to speak about internment but it was a good way for me to learn and to understand what my parents and grandparents went through."

Janice sees education as the key to building understanding and has been actively involved, as a professional and as a volunteer, in events that celebrate culture.

Through the Vernon Japanese Cultural Society she has been an active volunteer sharing about her culture for such events as Keirokai, which honors the older members, or pioneers of the Society, Obon, which is the Buddhist tradition of celebrating ones' ancestors, and Haru Matsuri, the Spring Festival celebrating Japanese culture.

“Celebrating our differences is really what it’s all about. I truly believe we all have something wonderful to give.”

~ Janice (Ouchi) Buick

As a former manager at Allan Brooks Nature Centre, Janice founded the First People's Celebration and is proud of what she helped to create there.

She was also an active organizer of the community celebration RespectFest in 2017.

"Celebrating our differences is really what it's all about," says Janice. "I truly believe we all have something wonderful to give."

Janice's passion for building bridges and understanding shines through as she speaks about her involvement in so many community events but she is very humble in being recognized for these accomplishments.

"It brings me to tears to think that someone thought enough to nominate me for this," she says modestly. "I just do what I do and I don't worry about any accolades. *Domo Arigato Gozaimasu* (Thank you very much)."

