

# **Dr. Clara Christie Might**

By Eshmeet Kaur

Back in the day, it was a very well-known belief that women should stay at home and take care of the kids, while the men go out and do the 'real work'. Dr. Clara Christie Might defied all of these senseless views, dominating her way through a predominantly male field of work, and accomplished her lifelong goals by pushing through all of the judgment and disbelief she received from the public. Not only did she work to become considerably successful, she simultaneously changed society's perspective on what women can or should be. Dr. Clara Christie Might empowered women all throughout Alberta and left an impact all over the world.

Might was born in Winchester, Ontario, on June 5, 1895, being the youngest of ten children parented by Thomas and Jemima Christie. In 1903, she moved to Calgary where she then attended grade school, and subsequently high school. At the age of 20, Might decided to complete a four-month course at Calgary Normal School and went on to teach school for four years from 1915 to 1919. Many years into this setting, Might finally decided to follow her dream of becoming an Obstetrician. She started the pursuit of her dreams by going to the University of Alberta to study medicine, and later transferred to Montreal McGill where she happened to be the only female in her class. After six years of devoting her life towards school and her studies, Might became one of the early females to graduate from the Faculty of Medicine, and to receive her Doctor of Medicine and Master of Surgery degrees. To kick off the beginning of Might's career, she started by interning at Montreal General Hospital for one year, followed by one year at the Yale University Hospital where she specialized in Obstetrics and Gynecology. Finally, in 1927, Might came to Calgary, and became the first female obstetrician in Alberta.

Might worked as an exceptional obstetrician for about 27 years until her retirement in 1955, and even after her retirement she continued to do wonders for all of Calgary. In 1965, she and her husband-Orrin Might-donated their first home together to the Calgary Indian Friendship Center, now known as the Aboriginal Friendship Center of Calgary, and is still a major focal point of Aboriginal activity to this day. In 1981, Might also inherited a property bought by her brother Nat in southwest Calgary. When she got full ownership over it, she decided to sell it and created the Nat Christie Foundation in honor of her brother. Her organization donated over six million dollars to help a myriad of projects and charities in Calgary. Her foundation is also still currently recognized, and is helping Calgararians today, as the University of Calgary provides a scholarship called the Nat Christie Foundation Medical Entrance award, which helps support students entering their first year in the Cumming School of Medicine, MD program. All throughout the course of these events, Might also took upon multiple leadership roles by partaking in a multitude of clubs including the Soroptimist Club, The Canadian Medical

Association, The Calgary Golf and Country Club, and last but not least the Calgary Ranchmans Club.

We all know Covid-19 has drastically impacted people all around the world in a span of three years, as it has resulted in 491 million cases and 6.15 million deaths all over the world. Reflecting upon the past years, it is easy to say everyone was negatively affected by this pandemic in one way or another, considering the worldwide lockdowns, loss of jobs, health problems or even the economic collapse. The main thing I want to focus on, which is not very well known, is how Covid-19 affected pregnant women. A soon-to-be mother already bears so much stress, worrying about their baby's well-being, taking care of their own body, and dealing with the pain that comes from pregnancy. Now consider if a mother was infected with Covid-19. This woman is now at risk of severe illness to a point where she might have to be hospitalized, and even be placed on a ventilator. These women are also at risk of having a premature birth, increasing the chances of suffering a stillbirth, and losing their child.

I feel Might would work to remedy this situation, and ensure the protection of these women. She would do this by working with her organization to donate, and advocate for hospitals so they get enough staff and equipment to help their patients, and keep the hospitals working at a healthy pace. Additionally, she would also use her platform to help spread awareness of the issues relating to Covid, and promote the actions the public can take to protect the safety of others from the virus. Lastly, I believe that Might would work long hours to the point of exhaustion, to support as many people as she could as a gynecologist, in spite of the fact that she was an exceptionally dedicated worker.

When I was scrolling through all of the Alberta Champions, I started reading through all of these people's stories, and their achievements, and while I was very impressed by what everyone had accomplished, no one really struck out to me. It took me two days to finally come across Dr. Might, and despite the fact that she didn't have the most accomplishments or the most detailed back story, her name just stuck in the back of my head. To this day there is still this underlying belief that men are inherently 'better' than women, and it affects many aspects in society like the wage gap within jobs, and the economic industry. Although it was more prominent in the past, this belief still affects a countless number of women today, including me. When I started reading about Might, it became clear to me that she was one of the women who started the evolution of societal beliefs, about women's abilities to be their own person. In my religion, it used to be very common for women to get married off at a very young age, so I absolutely admired Might's ambition, and confidence to go fulfill her full potential, and her ability to disallow the public's negative remarks, to discourage her. Might was a true leader, and I strive to gain the qualities she presented, to try and make an impact on my community.

Might has demonstrated to me that no matter how busy you may be with studying or working, there is always a way to make an impact on the community. This year I participated in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative, also known as YPI this year which gave schools all over Canada a chance to connect with charities, and donate \$5000 towards the charity of the winning group. This initiative mainly worked on recognizing local issues within Calgary, and advocating for the charities working to alleviate them. This program gave me the opportunity to give back to the community, and help those in need just like Might did with her foundation as a philanthropist. Although my group fell a bit short in the finals, it was still a great learning experience. I am also planning on volunteering during the summer in places like public libraries to help support children and even in hospitals, so I can experience at least a snippet of Might's experience as an obstetrician. In addition to this, one of the ways I have found to improve my communication, and leadership skills is through sports. This year I took part in the basketball, and the badminton team. It was a delightful experience, giving me the chance to enhance my teamwork and problem-solving skills. Participating in sports also included having wins, and losses giving me a chance to endure the ups and downs of life, which helps me learn how to rectify mistakes for the future.

Dr. Clara Christie Might did it all by being a doctor, philanthropist, a leader, and lastly a role model. She set an example for every woman and for people whose potential is overlooked and unrecognized. I believe that Might was an exponential factor in making history, and if she was here today she would continue to create more.

## References

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