

Ruth Gorman Video Script

by Louise Leyasa

Introduction

RUTH GORMAN: BORN A WOMAN

RUTH GORMAN: BORN A WOMAN *AND A FIGHTER.*

Born on February 14, 1914, in the bustling city of Calgary, Alberta.

Early Life

Ruth inherited a spirit of tenacity from her parents, Mark Bennett and Fleda Pattyson Peacock.

She followed in her father's footsteps, pursuing a career in law.

Wait...

Let's slow down!

I'll continue from her career in law.

Early Life (2)

Ruth attended the University of Alberta, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1937 and her Bachelor of Laws degree in 1939. She was one of the only two women in her law class, demonstrating her drive to challenge gender norms in a predominantly male profession.

Legal Advocacy and Activism

Joining the Alberta Bar in 1940, Ruth embarked on a journey fraught with challenges and triumphs, driven by her unshakable commitment to Indigenous rights. By 1951, the Indian Act underwent revisions by the Department of Indian Affairs, erecting formidable barriers for Indigenous Peoples striving to protect their rights, particularly regarding registration on reserves.

This change led to Gorman's involvement in the long legal battle known as the Hobbema Case from 1951 to 1957. In this important case, more than one hundred Cree First Nations people were at risk of being forced from the Maskwacis (Hobbema) reserve, leading to many court hearings and appeals. She played a crucial role in offering legal representation and rallying public support for the affected Indigenous communities.

During the late 1950s, Ruth embarked on a journey to Indigenous communities in 1958 and 1959. These expeditions set the stage for the Indian Association of Alberta's (IAA) impassioned presentation to the

Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on Indian Affairs. Ruth traversed vast landscapes, gathering signatures and vital data to present to Parliament, amplifying the voices and concerns of Indigenous peoples.

In 1960, Ruth, alongside notable figures like Howard Beebe, Chief John Samson, and Gerald Tailfeathers, presented the IAA's case to Parliament. *Their goal: to abolish enfranchisement.* Despite challenges, their perseverance led to the federal government amending the Indian Act that year, removing Section 112 and securing Indigenous Peoples' voting rights without compromising their Treaty Rights. This victory was pivotal, emphasizing Indigenous voices in governance and reducing their dependence on other communities.

From 1965 to 1975, Ruth Gorman published My Golden West Magazine, serving as both publisher and editor. She boosted diverse voices, fostered critical discourse, and engaged the community. In 1966, she received an honorary doctorate from the University of Alberta for her academic and advocacy work. The Cree community named her Queen Morning Star and Alberta Woman of the Century in 1967 for advancing Indigenous rights. She was also awarded the Order of Canada in 1968 for her national advocacy and dedication to justice.

Political Activism

In the early 1980s, Gorman played an active role in the Western Canada Concept Party of Alberta (WCC), opposing the Constitution Act. Through letters, speeches, and participation in WCC events, she voiced her dissent. Despite her concerns about the party's trajectory, Gorman remained steadfast in her opposition to perceived injustices, particularly regarding property rights and centralized power. Even after the passage of the Constitution Act in 1982, she persisted in her advocacy efforts, demonstrating her commitment to advocating for the rights and interests of Western Canadians.

Impact

Ruth Gorman's impact extends far beyond her tireless advocacy for Indigenous rights. As one of the few women in her law class at the University of Alberta in the 1930s, she broke down gender barriers, serving as an inspiration to aspiring female lawyers. Through her publication, My Golden West Magazine, Ruth created a platform for diverse voices, fostering dialogue and community engagement. Her unwavering leadership in amplifying marginalized perspectives exemplifies her steadfast commitment to social justice and equality, solidifying her legacy as a trailblazer for both Indigenous peoples and women across Canada.

Inspiration + Becoming a Champion

While exploring Ruth Gorman's story, I have discovered a deep reservoir of passion and strength. Her tale, chronicled in "Born a Woman," reveals the challenges faced in a predominantly male society but also showcases a growing determination in the face of adversity. Gorman's perseverance has inspired me to reflect on my own involvement in the community.

I used to only be involved in things occasionally, but now I am fully invested in making a difference. Whether it's lending a hand at my church by donating and packaging food and clothes, or at the library by supporting the education of children and sparking their enthusiasm for learning, every task holds significance for me. Additionally, *I've embraced leadership roles in my school to actively contribute to and encourage a positive change in the world around us.*

Ruth Gorman's story has taught me that true leadership is about lighting the way for others to follow and kindling change-igniting fires that burn long after we are gone.

The End

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